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S Y S T E M

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Divinity and Morality;

Containing a

SERIES of DISCOURSES

On the principal and most important Points of

Natural and Revealed Religion.

Compiled from the Works of the most eminent
Divines of the Church of *ENGLAND*.

V O L. V.

L O N D O N:

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S Y S T E M

OF

Discovery and Investigation



SERIES OF

On the principal and most important points of

Natural and Revealed Religion.

Continued from the Works of the same author
Printed at the Museum of Natural History

By the Trustees of the British Museum

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DISCOURSE CVII. Abp. Tillotson.

Of justification by faith and works.

Titus, 3. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.

THE apostle after having spoken of our justification by grace without works of righteousness, charges *Titus* to press the necessity of good works, on those who believed and embraced the gospel; on purpose, as it seems, to prevent all mistakes about the doctrine of justification by faith, and the free grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ; “* not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our saviour.” (that is, by our solemn profession of Christianity at our baptism) That being “justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.” And then he adds, “this is a faithful saying, and these things I will, that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed on God, might be careful to maintain good works.” They who are thus justified by the faith of the gospel, should not think themselves thereby excused from good works, but rather be more care-

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ful

* Tit. 3. 5, 6, 7, 8.

ful to maintain and practise them ; having solemnly engaged so to do, by their embracing and professing the Christian faith and religion. It is *they which believe in God* ; or such, who by being baptized, have professed Christianity, that must maintain good works. For it is not improbable, that the apostle having just before spoken of baptism, may by this phrase, *believe in God*, refer to the profession of faith made in baptism, which began in these words, *I believe in God* ; and then, they which have believed in God, are those who in baptism have made a solemn profession of Christianity. As if he had said, “ these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that all who profess themselves Christians, should be careful to maintain good works.” To practise all Christian virtues, especially such as are useful and beneficial to human society, because they *are good and profitable unto men*. The certain truth and evident credibility of this saying, that *they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works* ; will appear so, whether we consider the great end and design of religion in general, or of the Christian religion in particular.

And this will be very apparent, if we consider the great end and design of religion in general, which is to make us happy, by possessing our minds with the belief of a God ; and those other principles which have a necessary connexion with that belief, and by obliging us to the obedience and practice of his laws. And first by possessing our minds with the belief of God, and of those other principles, which have a necessary connexion with it. Such are the belief of the divine perfections, of the infinite goodness, wisdom, power, truth, justice, and purity of the divine nature ; a firm persuasion of his providence, that he governs and administers the affairs of the world, observes the actions

actions of men, and will require an account for them; the immortality of our souls, their endless duration after death, and the eternal rewards and punishments of another life. These are the great principles of natural religion, exclusive of any external revelation from God; and these are necessary and fundamental to religion, *for without faith, it is impossible to please God* *. There can be no such thing as the practice of religion, without the belief of its principles; and what these are, he tells us in the next words, "he that cometh to God, must believe that he his, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But we must not rest in the belief of a God and the principles of religion; for the meer belief thereof, will be neither acceptable to God, nor useful to ourselves. God would not have imprinted the notion of himself on our nature, nor required the belief of his being and providence, *only* that we might know there was such a being who made and governs us; but that this belief might influence and oblige us, to the obedience of his laws, which are the proper means of our happiness. *To profess that we know God, when in works we deny him, cannot avail us, because it will not be acceptable to God.* And therefore,

The great end and design of religion, is, that our minds being possessed and prepared by the principles of religion, the belief of these should properly influence and effectually oblige us to the obedience and practice of God's laws; which as they are the rule and measure of our duty, so are they the means whereby to obtain happiness. Obedience to God's laws is the condition of our temporal and eternal happiness, both in this and the other world. The promises which God hath made of temporal felicity and blessings, are on condition of

* Heb. 11. 6.

obedience to his laws; it is *godliness only* that *both the promise of this life as well as of the other* *. And though God frequently bestows many temporal blessings on very bad men, that such *his goodness* might lead them to repentance; yet he never made any promise of temporal blessings to wicked men; on the contrary, he threatens them, with great temporal evils and calamities: but all the promises, even of temporal good things, are made to them, who *keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.* And this is not only the condition on which the promises of temporal blessings are suspended, but generally the natural cause and means of these blessings; for indeed there is no moral duty enjoined by God, no virtue required from us, but what naturally tends to our temporal felicity in this world. Thus temperance and chastity tend to the blessing of health and the preservation of our estates, which are ruined and destroyed by lewd and riotous living; humility and meekness to our quiet and safety; justice and integrity to our reputation and honour, the chief instruments of temporal prosperity and success; kindness, charity, and a readiness *to do good to all*, in their nature tend to recommend us to the love and esteem of all men; and to their favourable regard and assistance, should we ever stand in need thereof. The same might be observed of all other virtues, the sincere practice whereof is the best method that any wise man can take, to attain the highest happiness, or avoid the greatest miseries of this world. There being no vice, no wicked practice, but what is naturally productive of some great temporal evil and inconvenience.

The practice of virtue and goodness, is also the necessary and only proper qualification, the certain and infallible means of attaining the future happiness

* 1 Tim 4 8.

pineness of another world; and without which we shall but hope for it in vain. As God will certainly punish the transgressors of his laws, so obedience to them, can only insure his rewards, for *without holiness no man shall see God*; *Christ* being the *author of eternal salvation only to them that obey him*. This the essential holiness and justice of God sufficiently assure us of, had he not declared it in his word. For in the very nature and reason of the thing, holiness and goodness, are the necessary and only proper qualifications for happiness; without enjoyment of God we cannot be happy, and for this holiness and goodness can only qualify us. Virtue and goodness are so essential to happiness, that it is impossible to be attained without them. God is the fountain of happiness, and we must be like him, if we will enjoy him. Could a wicked man steal into heaven, yet the temper and disposition of his mind would be so unsuitable to that holy place and company, that he would be extremely miserable even in the mansions of the blessed. Such a temper of mind, such a guilty conscience, as a sinner carries with him out of this world, will accompany and remain with him in the other. And guilt being always restless and full of torment, though God should not punish it with any positive infliction of pain, yet its own nature would make a man forever miserable. So that it is vain to imagine, that without the practice of virtue and holiness in this life, we can ever be happy in the other; indeed, a sincere repentance of our sins, will by God's mercy make us capable of happiness; but not unless our minds, lives and actions are changed, from the love and practice of vice, to a state of virtue and goodness; for we can hope for heaven and happiness on no other terms, than of constantly leading a holy and virtuous life. What great hazard and danger then do

those men run, who venture their everlasting happiness, on the infinite uncertainties of a death-bed repentance? But,

The truth of this proposition, that they *which have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works*; or, that faith, and a good life, ought to accompany each other; will be yet more evident, if we consider the end and design of the Christian religion in particular; which was to reform the world, to purify the hearts and lives of men, from corrupt affections and wicked practices, and teach them how to excel in all kinds of virtue and goodness. This is frequently and expressly declared in the new testament. The great promise of blessedness is made to the virtue of meekness, patience, peaceableness, purity, and righteousness by our Saviour in his excellent sermon on the mount, which is the summary of the Christian religion. *And the grace of God, or the doctrine of the gospel, "which brings salvation unto all men, hath appeared, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*."* In short, the whole design and doctrine of the gospel, is calculated to raise and exalt human nature to the highest pitch and perfection of virtue and goodness, and effectually to reform the hearts and lives of men.

God's merciful condescension to send his only son in our nature to live among us, and to die for us; was purely to reform mankind, and make them better. He was incarnate and came into the world, appeared in our nature, and was called *Jesus*, that he might *save his people from their sins*. He came to call sinners to repentance; to reclaim them to a better and more virtuous course of life, to recover mankind from a state of sin and misery,

to

* Tit. 2. 12.

to a state of holiness and happiness. He was manifested to take away our sins, and destroy the works of the devil. The great design of his life was, that he might give us a perfect and familiar example of all holiness and virtue; *I have given you, said he, an example, that ye should do as I have done* *. This was also the great design of his death and sufferings. *He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world; from the vicious customs and practices of it.* The death and sufferings of Christ did not only make expiation for our sins, but are proposed to us as a pattern of our mortification to sin, and a resurrection to a new life, and a most powerful argument there-to. “† *Christ died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them.* He was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” He who was without sin, was made a sacrifice for our sins; which should be a strong motive and argument to us, to endeavour after *the righteousness of God*.

And as the whole dispensation of the gospel tends to this end, so do its doctrines, which consist in the things to be believed; the duties to be practised; and the arguments and encouragements to the practice of those duties. And all these have a most direct tendency to reform mankind, and engage us to the practice of holiness and virtue. Whatever the Christian religion proposeth to our belief concerning God the father, the creator and governor of all things; and concerning Jesus Christ our Lord; the Holy Spirit of grace; the Catholic church; the communion of saints; the resurrection of the dead; and everlasting life after death; all and each of these, are so many arguments and rea-

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* John 13. 15.

† 2 Cor. 5. 15, 17.

sions, motives and encouragements to a good life. A sincere faith is the great principle of charity, *which is the fulfilling of the law*, and comprehends the duties of both tables. And the several articles of the christian faith ought to have a great influence on us, to the practice of holiness and virtue. The duties enjoined by the Christian religion, do also tend to the same end and design; I mean the laws and precepts of the gospel, which are the rules of a good life; and in the main substance of them, are the laws of nature cleared and perfected. For *Christ came not to destroy the law*, which was in force before; but to explain and clear it, where through the corruption and degeneracy of mankind, it was grown obscure; and to perfect it, by superadding some rules and precepts of greater goodness and perfection, than were before enjoined. Such as to abstain from revenge, to love our enemies, to forgive and do them good, and be perfectly reconciled to them after the greatest provocations. So that the precepts of the Christian religion are a perfect rule of virtue and goodness, the best and most absolute system of moral philosophy that ever was in the world; containing all the rules of virtue and a good life, that are to be found in the writings of the philosophers and wisest men in all ages; and delivered to us with greater clearness and certainty, in a more simple and unaffected manner, with greater authority, force and efficacy, than any philosopher and law-giver ever did. They teach us how to worship God in the best manner, most suitable to his nature and perfections; how to demean ourselves towards others, with all meekness and humility, justice and integrity, kindness and charity; and how to govern our unruly appetites and passions, and keep them within the bounds of reason. And all these duties and virtues are commanded in the name and authority of God,

by one commissioned by him, and sent from heaven on purpose to instruct us in the nature and practice of them. So that the doctrine of the gospel, is a plain and perfect rule of good life.

And then the Christian religion contains the most powerful arguments and encouragements to this purpose; I mean the threatnings and promises of the gospel. It threatens eternal misery and punishment to all wiful impenitent transgressors of the laws; and this is an argument which more powerfully affects human nature than any other. Many that could not be influenced by the love of God and goodness, nor the hopes of everlasting life, have been reclaimed from an evil course by the fear of hell, damnation, and a future judgment. To think of eternally suffering the terrible wrath and displeasure of almighty God, of being forever miserable without intermission and end, is a dismal consideration to any thinking man. *For who knows the power of God's anger? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* And yet to this amazing danger, to this intolerable misery, do all who live in the wiful contempt and disobedience of the laws of the gospel, expose themselves. For we read, that at "the end of the world, the son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth *." And that to the wicked shall be said, "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels †." And the apostle speaking of the last judgment, says, "the Lord Jesus shall then be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, inflaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with

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ever-

* Mat. 13. 40, &c.

† Mat. 25. 41.

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power *." So that the gospel gives all imaginable discouragement to the transgressors of God's laws, by denouncing the greatest dread and terror that can be presented to human nature; enough not only to restrain, but even to offer violence to nature, rather than be cast into hell, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched †."

The promises of the gospel are also full of encouragement to obedience. We have therein the promise of pardon and forgiveness; of grace and assistance; of eternal life and happiness, if we will repent and obey God's laws. *Through Christ is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all who believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses †."* And the promise of grace and assistance to enable us to obey, is most expressly made by our Saviour, to all who will resolve sincerely to make use of it ||; and to be assured, that God is most ready to afford his grace and assistance, if we heartily beg it; is a mighty encouragement to well doing. So that neither the consideration of our own weakness, nor the power of our spiritual enemies, need discourage us from doing our duty; since God so freely offers us, all such strength as shall be necessary to the purposes of holiness and virtue. For we may all say with St. Paul, *I am able to do all things, through Christ which strengthens me.* And eternal life, is the great promise of the gospel, the crown of all the rest. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life §.* A reward so great and glorious, so infinitely beyond our service and obedience, that nothing can be more encouraging. What should not men do, in hopes of eternal life, which

* 2 Thes. 1. 7, 8. † Mark 9. 48. ‡ Acts 13. 38.
|| Luke 11. 9. § 1 John 2. 25.

which God that cannot lye hath promised? The expectation of such reward, is sufficient to encourage us to do our utmost to attain it; but this cannot be done without holiness and obedience, since without that, *no man shall see the Lord.* Thus you may see, that the whole dispensation of the gospel, and all its doctrines, are calculated to reform the minds and manners of men. The great design of the Christian religion, is to clear, confirm, and perfect the natural law; to reinforce the obligation of moral duties by severer threatnings and greater promises; and to offer men more powerful grace and assistance to the practice of all goodness and virtue. And they do not understand the Christian religion, who imagine any other end or design of it. *Faith without works is dead.* For men to think that the meer belief of the gospel will save them without the real virtues of a good life, is a vain imagination.

But some will object to what has been said, that this is to advance and set up morality; that it contradicts St. Paul's doctrine of justification by the free grace of God, in Jesus Christ, and by faith, without the works of the law. To this I answer; that if by morality is meant counterfeit virtue, without the truth and reality of it, no such morality is here recommended; but those virtues only which are sincere and real. It is *righteousness and true holiness*, the sincere love of God and our neighbour, real meekness, patience, humility, sobriety, and charity; and not the shew, appearances, and vain ostentation, of any of these virtues, which I would persuade and press men to follow after. But if by moral virtues, the objectors mean such as concern the manners of men, which are in truth the duties enjoined by the natural or moral law, comprehended under those two great commands, the love of God, and our neighbour; then it may be

affirmed, that this kind of morality is the primary and substantial part of all religion, and most strictly required by the Christian. Our Saviour came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them; and therefore rebuked the Pharisees, who neglected the great duties of morality, the weightier matters of the law, mercy, judgment, fidelity, and the love of God; by telling others, that unless their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. And that great principle and rule of moral justice, to do to all men as we would have them do to us †; he enjoins as an essential part of religion, the sum and substance of our whole duty to our neighbour, and of all the precepts contained in the law and the prophets. So that moral duties and virtues, are the same with Christian graces, and that holiness and righteousness which the gospel requires, and they differ only in name. They are called virtues, in relation to their intrinsical nature and goodness; and graces, in respect to their being the effects of God's holy spirit on our minds. In a word, moral duties are of primary obligation, as being bound on us by the law of nature; and Christianity hath reinforced and seconded their obligation, by more powerful motives and encouragements.

As to the second objection, that this discourse seems to contradict St. Paul's doctrine of justification, by faith without works; I answer, that St. Paul when he asserts this, does not exclude the necessity of obedience to the moral precepts of the gospel, as the condition of our final justification and absolution at the great day; to enforce which, is the tenor of his doctrine throughout all his epistles. But whenever he says, we are justified by faith without works, he means, either that the law of

Moses

* Mat. 5. 17, 20.

† Mat. 7. 12.

Moses is not necessary to our justification and salvation; that *we* are not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of *Christ*, or, that any works of obedience and righteousness, will not gain the favour and acceptance of God, by way of merit; for we cannot challenge any thing of God as of debt, but we owe all to his free grace and mercy, having done but our duty, when we have done our best; therefore to him that worketh is the reward reckoned, not of grace but of debt. Or, lastly, he means, that works of righteousness are not necessary, antecedent to our first justification, and being received into a state of grace and favour with God; but that men, upon their solemn profession of Christianity at their baptism, and declaration of repentance, and resolutions of future amendment, were justified freely by God's grace, and saved by his mercy. He does not say, that after this solemn profession of Christianity, works of righteousness were not necessary, to continue them in this state of grace and favour with God; but on the contrary declares the necessity of them; this is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. So that the seeming difference between *St. Paul* and *St. James* is easily reconciled. The former affirms, that a sinner is at first justified, and received into the favour of God, by a sincere profession of the Christian faith, without any works of righteousness preceding. The latter affirms, that no man continues in a justified state, and in favour with God, whose faith doth not bring forth good works, and manifest itself to be truly and lively, by a constant obedience and good life.

I have not time particularly to recommend by way of application, the great virtues of Christianity, the proper and genuine fruits of the spirit of *Christ*,
such

14. Of justification by faith, &c. DIS. CVIII.

such are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance; which shall be the subject of my next discourse; and shall therefore only just mention those duties which concern the several conditions and relations of men. Those then who are teachers of others, should not only be careful to preach sound doctrine, but in all things shew themselves patterns of good works. Those who are subject to others, should pay all duty and obedience to their superiors; as children to their parents; servants to their masters; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; and those who are subjects, should live in all peaceable and humble obedience to princes and magistrates. Those of an inferior condition should labour and be diligent in the work of an honest calling; for this is privately good and profitable unto men, and to their families; and those who are above this necessity, and in a better capacity to maintain good works, properly so called; such as works of piety, charity, and justice, should be careful to promote and advance them according to their power and opportunity; because these things are publickly good and beneficial to mankind. And may the grace of God which bringeth salvation, even the gospel of Christ, that hath appeared to all men, teach us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." To whom be all glory and praise both now and ever more.

DIS-

DISCOURSE CVIII. *Attendbury.*

Of the fruits of the spirit.

Gal. 5. 22. 23.

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.

THE apostle in this chapter represents to us the different fruits of the flesh, and of the spirit; and shews the opposition which is between them, to the end we may chuse the one and refuse the other. *The works of the flesh are manifest; these are adultery, fornication, witchcraft, variance, wrath, strife, &c.* But the fruits of the spirit are more difficult to be known, it requiring some care and diligence to distinguish them from counterfeit graces. These mentioned in the text, are the chief and principal, but not all the fruits of the spirit; however they are sufficient to discover whether the spirit of God dwells in us. And to encourage us to practise the graces of the holy spirit, and to avoid the works of the flesh, St. Paul assures us, that *if we live after the flesh we shall die; but if thro' the spirit, we do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.* That is, if we bring forth these fruits of the holy spirit, by the practice of these graces, we shall not be condemned, nor liable to those punishments which those are exposed to, who give themselves up to the undue gratification of their sensual appetites and desires.

Of

|| Rom. 8. 13.

Of the fruits of the spirit, the first here mentioned, is *love*, (in the original, *charity*) which in general imports piety to God, and good-will towards men. But in this place it seems to be restrained to benevolence and loving kindness towards our fellow creatures. Indeed, this love of our neighbour is not only the chief and principal, but the source and original of all those other graces, called the fruits of the spirit. Our joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, do all proceed from that spirit of love, which the Christian religion infuses into the minds of its professors. He that seriously considers, that we have all one lord and master, one faith, one baptism, and one hope of arriving at the same rest and haven for our souls; must think it highly reasonable, that we should be of one heart and mind. If we are all travelling to our father's house, why should we fall out by the way, and break that unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, which alone can make us fit inhabitants of the heavenly *Jerusalem*? The nature of pure and undefiled religion is to unite the minds of its disciples, to calm the disorders of their passions, to restrain their inordinate appetites, and cement their affections to each other. For as God is love, the better we love and serve him, the more shall we be like him; and shall thereby the more partake of this divine quality, of loving our neighbour, doing good to all men, and rendering ourselves beneficial to others: not only in relieving the poor, but in employing our time, parts and talents which God has entrusted us with, to advance his glory and promote the welfare of our neighbour. To feed him when hungry, to clothe him when naked, to inform him when ignorant, to reprove him when doing evil, and encourage him when doing well; and to perform all those good offices which we should like to have done to us, were we in his

con-

condition. And it is an observation worth notice, that all the great and cardinal virtues of the Christian religion are social; such as tend to promote the welfare of societies, to support government, to make people prosper and flourish, by being mutually helpful and assisting to one another. Indeed, wicked and ungodly men have made religion subservient to very different purposes; to be the occasion of the great disturbances, bloody wars and deplorable devastations, that have happened in the world; and to sanctify the most villainous attempts. But this is not the fault of religion, (for the best things may be applied to the worst purposes) but of the men, who only pretend to be what they are not. Thus is love, the proper and genuine fruit of the holy spirit. I proceed to shew, what is meant by joy, another fruit of the spirit.

This spiritual joy is of the same nature, with what is called, *joy in the Holy Ghost*. Such a joy as hath the holy spirit for its author, and can only lodge in a holy and sanctified soul; by which a man is pleased and delighted to see men love and serve God, and advance his glory in the world. As when the consideration of God's wonderful goodness incites us to praise and magnify his great name, filling our hearts with joy and gladness. When we sympathise with others in the good they receive; and with the blessed angels in heaven, rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, and take delight in seeing him turn from the evil of his ways. This is that spiritual joy which is opposed to a narrow, selfish temper, when men seek after nothing but their own advantage, and will do good to none but themselves. Or, what is much worse, when men are envious and malicious; and hate that others should enjoy the good things of life; and are well pleased when any affliction or misfortune happens to their neighbour. This is a temper of mind directly contrary

trary to that joy, which is the fruit of the spirit; and much resembles those apostate spirits, who make it their business to reduce mankind into the same deplorable state of misery with themselves.

The third fruit of the spirit mentioned in the text is peace; or a mind studious of preserving peace among men. A Christian and charitable desire to maintain peace with the whole world; an earnest endeavour to make up differences and quarrels, and to reconcile such as by any unhappy accident have been at variance. When men are of a pacific and healing temper, ready to forgive injuries themselves, and to compose the exorbitant passions of other men, this is one of the blessed fruits and effects of the Holy Spirit; such peace-makers as these, of so heavenly disposition of mind, shall certainly be blessed in this world and the next. But very contrary to this is that devilish and wicked temper, which takes delight to live in contention and strife; who make it their business to set others together by the ears, and like *Salomon's* whisperers, to separate the nearest friends. When men break the public peace, by fomenting unquiet and turbulent spirits, making divisions and parties; or else disturb the quiet and contentment of private families, by whispering, tale bearing, uncharitable censures, on uncertain surmises and reports; or widening the differences of such as are at variance, by improving a slight misunderstanding into an open quarrel; this is a temper and disposition quite opposite to that which is *the fruit of the holy spirit*.

After peace, follows long-suffering, or forbearing one another; rather enduring some injuries and affronts, than to vindicate ourselves. A good man is not easily provoked, but is willing to hope the best of others; and tho' he is not possessed of a stoical insensibility, but can easily distinguish a kindness from an injury, and takes exact notice of the dif-

ferent

ferent entertainment he meets with in the world ; yet his Christian prudence and discretion teaches him not to mind every trifling injury and small affront, but to pass by and forgive the greatest, when he sees any hopes of repentance ; and that his enemy relents, and is sorry for his unjust dealing. This is that long-suffering mentioned in the text, to which is joyned, gentleness and goodness. These are much of the same import, and denote that calmness of temper, sweetness of disposition, pleasantness of conversation, inoffensiveness of behaviour ; in a word, that humanity which is a grace of the holy spirit, influencing mens lives and conversation. For we must always endeavour to do as much good as we can, to be useful in our several stations ; we must not only forgive injuries, and be of a peaceable quiet temper ! but must lay aside all sourness and moroseness of temper. We must be of a meek and humble, a kind and condescending, a courteous and inoffensive behaviour ; and so recommend the gospel of our Saviour to others, as to render it lovely and amiable in the sight of all men. God in the holy scripture is represented to us by the lamb and the dove, the most innocent, mild and gentle of all creatures ; and if we will partake of this godlike temper of mind, we must avoid all pride and superciliousness, moroseness and ill humour.

The next qualification is faith or fidelity ; that is, truth in keeping our promises, performing our bargain, compact and agreements, tho' it be to our hurt and disadvantage ; and even was there no witness thereto, but only our own conscience. This is the foundation of all justice, without it we cannot be just and honest men ; much less good, pious and religious persons. Meekness being of the same signification with gentleness and goodness ; I proceed to consider temperance, which is the last mentioned in the text.

By

By temperance is meant the governing our inordinate unruly passions; the moderate and rational use of meats and drinks, of the pleasures and enjoyments of life. Indeed, according to the vulgar notion, temperance consists only in the moderate use of meats and drinks; but tho' this is an eminent instance of temperance, yet in strictness of speaking, he who knows how to govern his passions, so as to love and hate, to fear and be angry; to bound and limit his desires after pleasures, riches and honours, according to reason; such a man may be esteemed truly temperate. For temperance is properly the governing all our desires, passions and appetites by the laws of right reason; and to submit all the faculties of our soul, all the powers of our body, to those rules which Christ hath laid down in the gospel. So that he is the temperate man who hath subdued his passions, and doth not indulge himself in any extravagant course of living; or that does not give himself up to any manner of excess, either in meat, drink, or apparel; in the pursuit of riches, pleasures, or preferment; nor lets loose the reins to anger, lust, or revenge: but serves God diligently and industriously in his calling or station, and rests contented with that portion which the wise governor of the world is pleased to allot him. This is that temperance which is the fruit of the spirit, and completes the character here given in the text, of a truly religious and virtuous person.

But it may be proper to enquire in what sense these graces are called the *fruits of the Holy Spirit*; since among the heathens many were eminent for some of these virtues. They were just, sober and temperate, and made it their business to do good in the world. They practised these virtues in so high a degree as to shame those Christians among us, who pretend to greater holiness and perfection;

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What then is the difference between the virtues of a Heathen, and the graces of a Christian? I answer, this, that they proceed from different principles. The virtuous actions of Christians proceed from the operation of the holy spirit of God, which are the fruits of the spirit. Every one who is baptized into the church of Christ, enters into a firm and solemn covenant with God; he promises to be obedient to all the laws of God, and God engages to enable him to perform this vow and promise. He will grant him the assistance of his holy spirit, which will take possession of his soul, and influence all his actions. Indeed, he will not work in us irresistibly, so as to oblige us to do good against our wills; but he will furnish us with such a competent measure of spiritual strength, as, in concurrence with our own endeavours, will enable us to perform whatsoever God requires. So that the Holy Spirit is the principal of all those actions which flow from grace; but the virtuous actions of heathens flow only from the dark remains of natural light, and the imperfect dictates of improved reason; which tho' it may discover part of our duty, yet can never supply us with sufficient power to perform it. Besides, they acted by different motives. The Heathen is moved chiefly by some temporal advantage, he loves virtue for those sensual emoluments and rewards which attend it; but the Christian has an eye to that recompence of reward which is to come after this short life is ended. His hope is not here, but he expects and waits for an eternal never-fading crown of glory. They also aim at a different end. The Heathen principally designs his own glory; but the Christian has in view the glory of God, and obedience to his laws. These are the chief differences between a virtuous Heathen and a religious Christian; or between virtue and grace: by which it appears that the same actions may be of
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different natures, according to the different circumstances of things. I shall now make a few inferences from what has been said.

And we may hence learn, wherein consists the principal duties of the Christian religion; which are love, peace, justice, and temperance. Religion is not here made to consist in any external rites and performances, in our being listed members of the true church, or of any sect or party of Christians; in the sole perfection of an orthodox faith, or in the performance of the devotional parts of religion; such as appearing before God in public, hearing and reading his word: but in practising the precepts of Christianity, in leading our lives and conversations according to the gospel, in subduing our passions and appetites; in living justly, soberly and temperately; in maintaining a sincere and universal charity both towards God and men. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God ||." These are the chief and principal duties that God requires of us; but then we must not leave the others undone.

Hence we may also discover, whether we have the Spirit of God, or not. This is an enquiry of the utmost importance, for if we have not God's spirit, we are in a lost and undone condition, as to all the hopes of happiness in another world. The best way to know this, is to consider, whether we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, mentioned in the text. Which tho' they are not all of them, yet these are the chief and principal, and sufficient to discover to any man what his condition is as to another life, and what his state will be hereafter. Let us therefore seriously ask ourselves, do we love God and our neighbour? are we peaceable, just and temperate? do we govern our appetites and pas-

passions? are we content with our lot and portion in this world, and can cheerfully submit to God's will, in all conditions, and under all calamities, without murmuring and repining? If we find in ourselves these fruits of the spirit, we may be assured that the spirit of God is in us; that we have received the adoption of children, or heirs of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. But on the contrary, if we find that we are of a malicious, envious, revengeful and implacable temper; that we are given up to unlawful lusts, any ambitious or sinister views; if we indulge our inordinate passions beyond measure and reason; if we are of a covetous sordid principle, not willing to do good offices to others; if we are factious, turbulent and seditious; uneasy to government, and troublesome to our neighbours, either by lying, backbiting, tale-bearing, envying or railing; or are of a proud, censorious and uncharitable temper; we may then certainly conclude, that we are in a wrong way, and are the children, not of God, but of our father the devil. For these are manifestly the works of the flesh, and therefore called the works of the devil, and we are his servants if we do his work. It will not avail us at the last day, tho' we cry, *Lord, Lord*, and make an open profession of religion; nay, tho' we have *promised in his name, and done many wonderful works*. That is, tho' we should preach the gospel to others, and perform miracles in confirmation of it; yet if we do not practise its precepts, our Lord and Saviour in that day will bid us depart from him, because we are *workers of iniquity*. I would not be mistaken; a good man may be guilty of many sins thro' the frailty and infirmity of his nature; nay, even presumptuous sins as *David* was: But then he washes off the guilt by a solemn and unfeigned repentance; he endeavours to obtain God's pardon by a long course of

of contrition, and a thorough reformation of life, and a sincere and hearty desire to live better for the future. He brings forth fruits meet for repentance, even those fruits of the spirit which are love, joy, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law; and to which the word of God promiseth eternal happiness.

But if we live in the spirit, we ought also to walk in the spirit. God is a pure and holy being, and takes delight in those who bear his image and similitude. And the gifts and graces of his spirit are bestowed upon us, that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and our hearts become a fit habitation for his holy spirit to dwell in. And therefore the more holy we are, the more shall we resemble God, and conform our minds to the divine nature; and the more shall we love, serve and please him. It is the peculiar office of the holy spirit, to sanctify and make us holy; and the more we partake of it, the more exact and regular will be our lives. For the true notion of a spiritual life, is not a life wholly spent in the devotional part of religion; but according to the rules of reason, and the dictates of God's holy word, which will influence all our thoughts, words and actions. The holy spirit will suggest good thoughts in our minds, inspire us with holy and generous resolutions, and incite and allure us to good and virtuous actions. This will make us fruitful and to abound in every good work; our actions will naturally follow the prevailing interests of our minds, and our wills pursue the dictates of our understanding. If our thoughts are taken up with the delight of this world, and our minds allured with sensual pleasures; then our chief employment will be to gratify our irregular appetites, and obtain such things as are pleasing and delightful to us: But if we are heartily convinced of the danger which these

these perishing enjoyments expose us to, if we are sensible of our folly in pursuing them, and upon mature deliberation wisely prefer an holy and spiritual life, before a carnal and sensual one ; then will our choice and inclination lead us to live such lives, as God and our own consciences will approve of, agreeable to the dictates of reason, the dignity and excellency of our spiritual and immortal part.

God has promised us his divine assistance, whereby we shall receive sufficient power and ability to perform our duty, and walk in the way of his commandments. So that it must be our own fault, if after we have entered upon a regenerate state, we return to a sensual and wicked life. From hence arises a most strict and powerful obligation for us to live an holy spiritual life ; because the neglecting of it would be to despise God's grace and grieve his holy spirit, by slighting his motions ; which will provoke him to leave and forsake us, to give us up to our worst enemies, to the conduct of our own vicious inclinations, and to suffer us without any check or remorse, to proceed in our sinful courses with pleasure and delight. But if we have once entered upon a regenerate state, have tasted how good and gracious God is, and pretend to live by the spirit, and yet do not ; our condemnation and punishment will be greater than other mens. For we had better not have known the ways of righteousness, than afterwards to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto us. It must needs be a great aggravation of our sin, if after we have performed our duty, and experienced the grace of God assisting us to vanquish and overcome our spiritual enemies ; we should suffer ourselves to be again led captive by the enemy. This would be a sad scandal thrown upon Christianity, and be in effect, to disown our profession, and renounce our baptism. If then we have entered upon a new and spiritual

life, let us never again return to folly, nor suffer ourselves to be deluded by those pleasures of sin which are but for a season ; but let us implore the assistance of God's holy spirit, improve that grace which he has given, comply with his counsels and motions, and in all things follow his guidance and direction ; which will enable us to walk in the paths of virtue, and to persevere to the end, in a holy and godly life.

It is the duty of every good Christian to grow in grace, to improve in virtue and piety, to proceed from one degree of grace to another ; for if we do not go forward in the ways of virtue, we are assuredly turning aside to the crooked paths of error and vice. If our good habits do not daily encrease, and that we are not deeper rooted in the fear and love of God, it is a certain sign that our spiritual life languishes and decays, and that we are in a declining dangerous condition. Let it then be our great care to entertain the motions, and cherish the blessed influence of God's holy spirit. And since its gifts and graces are the springs and principles of all spiritual life in our souls, and which are not wrought in us after an irresistible manner, but in conjunction with our own diligent endeavours ; it from hence evidently appears, that our great care ought to be, to purge and cleanse our souls from every unclean thing, that they may be a suitable habitation for God's holy spirit to dwell in. And by complying with its motions and influences, and making a good use of that grace which God has given us, we shall encrease in favour with God and man, and at last obtain that everlasting life, which he hath promised, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE CIX. Abp. Sharpe.

The obligations on Christians, to practise religion.

Ephes. 4. 1.

— *Walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith you are called.*

AS God hath brought us out of the darkness of Heathenism into the light of the gospel, we should therefore walk as children of light, and * *worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.* We profess a pure and holy religion, that promises its followers inestimable privileges and benefits. This is our calling, our vocation, and our lives ought to bear some resemblance thereto. The frame of our minds, and the tenor of our actions, should hold some proportion with the dignity and mighty advantages of this high calling in Christ Jesus. For a man to be a Christian in name only, to own Christ for his Lord, and the gospel for his rule; and yet to live like a heathen, an atheist, or an epicure, is such a piece of inconsistency and unreasonableness, as not to admit of any apology. Would Christians but seriously enquire what the nature of their profession or vocation is, and what benefits they expect from it, they need no other instructor, no further motives or arguments to oblige them to live worthy of it. To assist Christians therefore in making these enquiries, I shall consider our vocation in general, and shew what

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* *Eph. 4. 1.*

obligations *that* lays upon us ; and then observe some particulars, which will enforce the general consideration.

I begin with our Christian vocation in general. And let me ask, what sort of life doth so clear, so full, so excellent a discovery of God's will, for the salvation of mankind by *Jesus Christ*, require of all those who have the knowledge of it? how should they live who are called from darkness to light ; from ignorance of God and themselves, to a plain and clear knowledge of his will ; from the bondage of death, to a certain hope of a glorious immortality ; from a profane and impious worship, to a holy, pure and reasonable service? Will not nature teach us, that in proportion to any superior advantages which any one has above others, that such a person ought to be more exact and regular in his life, more careful to approve himself to God, more studious of his will, more zealous and industrious in his service, than other men, who have not those means or privileges? Now, this is our calling, this is the vocation of Christians ; and yet how *unworthy* are we of it, unless it produces those effects in us? nay, this our vocation will turn to our unspeakable misery and punishment, if it be not attended with such fruits. * *If I had not*, says our Saviour, *come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.* There was something to be said for men, who lived in Heathen darkness, who had no other guide but the mere light of nature, and that greatly darkened and obscured, by an universal degeneracy and corruption of manners. The † *times of this ignorance* God might be supposed to wink at, or lightly punish such men for their sins, ‡ *because they knew not their master's will, and therefore should*
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* John 15. 22.

† Acts 17. 30.

‡ Luke 12. 48.

be beaten only with few stripes. Nay, there was something also to be said in excuse for those who lived a worldly, sensual, and vicious life, under the *Jewish* dispensation; who, though they were in covenant with God, and had his laws and promises, yet both these being in appearance of an earthly temporal nature, and in a manner relating only to the things of this life, it was not easy for them to raise up their minds above this world; in regard they wanted both light and encouragement, to put them upon a vigorous pursuit of holiness here, and happiness hereafter. There was something therefore to be said in apology for the *Jews*; but for us who are under the Christian dispensation, who have been instructed in the whole will of God, and that by no less a master than his own son; we who have the strongest demonstrations given us of another life after this, the most explicate promises that we shall be partakers of it, if we obey God's laws. We who have the plainest and fullest rules to direct us in our obedience, so that none how ignorant soever, if honest and sincere, can possibly miss of their way to heaven. Lastly, we who have all this made out to us with so much clearness of evidence, as to leave no place for doubting in any reasonable mind. I say, what can be said for us, if after these great opportunities put into our hands, of † *entering into God's everlasting rest, any of us fall short thro' disobedience, or unbelief.* Happy we Christians above all men, in having these clear discoveries of God's will, these inestimable advantages, if we do embrace and entertain them, improve and make that use of them, we ought to do, by leading a holy, pure, and heavenly life; but certainly if we do not, we shall be the more inexcusably wretched of any under heaven; much better had it been for us * *never*

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† Heb. 3. 11, 19.

* 2 Pet. 2. 21.

to have known the way of righteousness, than after we have known it, to depart from the holy commandment given unto us.

If we consider in how much darkness great part of the world lies, and what a glorious light shines forth to us Christians? How little hopes or means they have of everlasting salvation, and how abundantly God hath furnished us with both; so that nothing is wanting to our being everlastingly happy, but only our own choice and concurrence? How ought this consideration to affect us! What infinite thanks do we owe to our gracious God for these unspeakable mercies! And how can we express our thankfulness but by loving him, and devoting ourselves entirely to his service? There are few nations in the world so barbarous, as not to be of some religion or other. They believe a God, and that his providence governs the world: even the generality of pagans expect another life after this, wherein good men shall be rewarded, and wicked men punished. But then these general fundamental truths, are so eclipsed with error, and a multitude of false and wicked principles, that their condition is very deplorable. What false notions have they of God and his perfections! What horrible idolatry and superstition in all their worship! How slenderly grounded is their belief of another life! How ignorant of the will of God and the way of recommending themselves to his favour! How ridiculous and impious, are the methods they have recourse to for this purpose! But blessed be God, we Christians have none of these difficulties to struggle with. We have a holy and pure religion taught us by Christ our Lord, every way worthy of God, and fitted to all the necessities of man. We have a religion that teaches us to serve God suitable to his, and our nature; that imposeth nothing, but what is good and excellent,

cellent, in itself, tending to the perfection of our natures, to the peace and happiness both of private and public societies. Our religion leaves us not to uncertain conjectures about a future salvation, but we have God's express word and promise for it, sealed by the blood of his own son, confirmed by his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into the kingdom of heaven. It not only directs us how to get to that glorious place where our Saviour is, but has so plainly described to us the way that leads to it, that if we are not extremely wanting to ourselves, we cannot fail of arriving thither. The Christian religion recommends itself to our reason and understanding, having nothing trifling, or absurd in it.

Lastly, our religion has all the proof and evidence, that in the nature of the thing can be given. It is a religion predicted by the prophets; owned by God's own voice from heaven; established by an innumerable multitude of signs, wonders, and miracles, for a hundred years together; attested by the glorious resurrection of our Saviour from the grave, and his visible ascension into heaven; confirmed by the lives and wonderful actions of innumerable wise, good and divine men, who professed it; and asserted by the sufferings of many thousand glorious martyrs and confessors; who from age to age refused no torments, no cruelties of death, to shew how firmly they believed it. This then being the case of the Christian religion; this the happy and glorious *vocation to which we are called* by our Lord *Jesus*, what obligation do we lie under above all the rest of mankind, to be serious in the service of God; pure and unblameable in our lives, and to abound in ** all the fruits of righteousness*. What † *manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness*! Can there

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* Phil. 1. 11.

† 2 Pet. 3. 11.

be any among us who * *names the name of Christ, and yet not depart from all iniquity*? Is it possible, that where so glorious a light shines forth, there should be any atheists or unbelievers? Any such thing as profaneness, adultery, whoredom, drunkenness, envy, malice, covetousness, or the like? Such as these are the proper fruits of the heathen state, out of which Christ hath delivered us: and none of them should be found among Christians. These are the works of darkness, and fit only for such people where the light of the gospel never appeared; but are no way becoming those, who profess to believe in our Lord *Jesus*. The Heathens were many of them ashamed of such practices, and therefore should shame Christians; many of them, notwithstanding the great darkness and ignorance they lay under, the multitude of ill examples they had before them, yet so preserved the dignity of human nature, as to keep themselves pure from those crimes and immoralities I have before mentioned; nay, many of them, without any other power but that of nature, have, through the blessing of God upon their endeavours, not only lived free from open vice, but have been indeed patterns of virtue. They have been exemplary for justice and temperance, fortitude and patience, fidelity and truth, munificence and liberality, moderation and contempt of the world. Several such instances there are, not only among the antient *Greeks* and *Romans*, but among the modern *Indians* and *Japonese*, and other barbarous nations. How much more in this are they to be commended and applauded, than even some of us who pass among the better sort of Christians! And what an eternal shame and reproach is it, that the generality of us are not be named with many of the pagans, for true virtue and religion! Is this † *to walk worthy*

* 2 Tim. 2. 19.

† Eph. 4. 1.

thy of the calling wherewith we are called? Is this to adorn the doctrine of God in all things? They with all their ignorance, and all their errors in matters of religion, lived honestly, had a sense of God and virtue; but a great many of us, with all our light, encouragements, and assistances live like brutes, like men without God, slaves to innumerable follies, lusts and passions. But let us not deceive ourselves, † *God is no respecter of persons.* I heartily wish that these poor heathens, of whom we generally have so mean an opinion, may not one day rise up in judgment against us Christians, and condemn us.—I have hitherto considered our vocation in general, as it is the profession of the Christian religion, and by this general account, we may easily perceive, what great obligations are laid upon us Christians above all men, to lead holy, pure, and virtuous lives; and how unworthy we are of that name, if we do act consistently thereto; but of this we shall be more convinced, if we consider what has been done for, or promised by us on the taking this calling upon ourselves; which brings me to observe some particulars, in order to enforce what has been said. And,

Let us seriously consider, what kind of life should that man lead, who, through the infinite kindness of the son of God, is rescued from hell and death; redeemed from the wrath of God, and the insupportable vengeance of eternal fire, which his sins did justly deserve? And this at no less price than the son of God's laying down his life, and shedding his most precious blood, that he might thereby make a propitiation for us? This then is the case of every Christian. And ought we who have been pardoned so many, so high and great provocations, to continue in our sins? Should we take advantage of God's inexpressible mercies to multiply

our affronts against heaven, and * *because grace hath abounded, that sin may much more abound?* Surely every man, who is sensible what it cost the son of God to redeem sinners, should have other thoughts, and reason thus; that since our dear Lord hath, at so vast a price, obtained the pardon of our sins, and by calling us to his service hath given us a title to that pardon, we should, above all things take care, not again to offend our God, and provoke his displeasure against us. And whoever has any sense of ingenuity, cannot but look upon this astonishing kindness of our Lord, in redeeming us with his blood, as the greatest obligation that could possibly be laid on us, to renounce, abandon, and hate with a perfect hatred, all sin and wickedness, of every kind and degree.

Let us ask ourselves what kind of conversation becomes that man, who hath solemnly dedicated himself to God; who hath publicly professed to renounce the devil and all his works, the vanities of the world, and the lusts of the flesh, and devoted himself forever to his creator and redeemer? For this is the case of us Christians, by the engagement we have entered into at baptism, and which many since have often renewed at the Lord's supper; so that being thus solemnly consecrated to God and Christ, we are not at our own disposal, but have entirely given up ourselves to God, to be disposed of by him. Let us seriously think of this, and then judge what kind of conversation will be worthy our calling; whether, without the greatest guilt, we can allow ourselves in any known, open course of wilful sin? Whether being thus devoted to God, we shall not be false to our engagements, if we do not make his service the chief business and design of our lives?

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* Rom. 5. 20.

Let us ask ourselves further, what kind of life should that man lead, who is called into the nearest relation to God, and from a child of wrath, and slave of Satan, is made *the son of God*, the brother of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and *§ a joint heir with him of the inheritance of God*? Certainly, a person who is thus highly dignified, ought to have a great, noble, and generous soul, suitable to that quality to which he is so highly advanced; and should behave in all circumstances, bravely and worthily, so as not to disparage that alliance, with which he is honoured. For as we are Christians, and profess Christ's religion, we are the ** children of the most high*, and *† the son of God is not ashamed to call us brethren*; we are made *‡ kings and priests unto God our father*. We are *|| his friends, his favourites, his chosen ones*. These are the titles bestowed upon Christians by the inspired writers. Let us therefore consider these privileges of our calling, and then judge what kind of conversation becomes us.

Let us ask ourselves likewise, what sort of life he is to lead, who owns the gospel of Christ, for the rule of his actions, and who hath engaged himself to observe all its commands? Whoever reads the gospel, knows what kind of precepts it contains, and must be convinced, that no rules of living ever before given, can compare with it, for perfectness and exactness. Indeed, it lays no great stress on any kind of ceremonies or outward observances; God never puts any value upon these, in any religion. But for the things which are intrinsically good, and do really perfect and adorn human nature, and accomplish the mind of man: of these the Christian institution, or the gospel, contains the highest, the noblest, the exactest, and most se-

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§ Rom. 8. 17. * Luke 6. 35. † Heb. 2. 11.
 ‡ Rev. 5. 10. || John 15. 14, 15.

vere that ever were established. There all sorts of purity and holiness, every kind and degree of virtue are recommended, and whatever hath but the appearance of vice and sin, is discouraged; there we are required to be * *holy as God is holy*; † *to be merciful, as he is merciful*; and to restrain our disorderly desires and appetites. We are not only forbid to commit adultery, to kill, steal, or defraud our neighbours of their right, or the like; but even our thoughts, if consenting to such things, are by the gospel declared culpable.

As we must not commit adultery, so we must *not look upon a woman to lust after her*. As we must not defraud our neighbour, so neither must *we covet what belongs to him*. As we must not kill, so neither must *we be angry without a cause*. As we must not do an injury, so neither must *we revenge any done to us*. As we must not be ungrateful to our friends, so neither must *we hate our enemies, but do them all the good we can*. And thus as to all other instances of our duty. And what a holy, pure, just and excellent religion is this? Worthy to come from God, worthy of our Lord *Jesus Christ* to promulgate, and most worthy of us to be observed. And therefore let every one, who names the gospel of Christ, *walk worthy of this his vocation*, by seriously endeavouring to bring all his thoughts, words and deeds, to a conformity with the laws of it.

And, in the next place, let us ask ourselves how that man ought to live, who professes to imitate the example of our Lord *Jesus*. Our calling, our vocation, is to be the disciples of Christ; and the very notion of being a disciple, is to live according to the pattern of him whom we call our master. And therefore, if we pretend to be Christ's disciples, if we take him for our pattern, then we must

* 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16. † Luke 6. 36. *walk*

*walk as he walked, be * humble and meek, and lowly in heart, for he was so in the greatest degree. We must not be arrogant or assuming, but descend to the meanest offices of civility and charity. We must be easy and gentle to all about us, not easily provoked, but be ready to forgive the injuries done us, for this was the way of our master. He was gentle to all men; patient under the greatest sufferings, and so regardless of injuries, that he not only forgave those who had the malice to take away his life, but he heartily prayed for them †. He never sought himself, or his own interest, but only the glory of God. And can we then be called his followers, who seek nothing but ourselves in all our designs and actions? Who have no regard to God's glory, but only to our own interests. He was full of tenderness and compassion to all who needed his help; nay, he went about doing good ‡, it was the business of his life. And can we think it becomes us his disciples, to be hard hearted, pitiless, and unmerciful? To be surly, selfish, or covetous? To live uselessly and unprofitably in our generations? When God has given us sundry talents, means and opportunities, whereby we may do much good, and be very useful to others in our place and station. He, though full of employment, yet constantly had times of retirement from the world, to perform the spiritual exercises of prayer, meditation, and communion with God: Nay, he sometimes spent whole nights in those exercises ||; and can we his disciples find no leisure for our devotions? No time for communion with God? Can we satisfy ourselves with now and then only putting up a few cold, formal, heartless prayers to him? Again,*

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* Matt. 11. 29.

† Luke 23. 34.

‡ Acts 10. 38.

|| Luke 6. 12.

Our Lord was very contented, thankful, and heartily resigned to God, though he had not so much as * *an house to put his head in*; and can it then become us his followers, to be uneasy under our present circumstances, or to repine at God's dispensations to us? Is it decent that we should be discontented at our condition, when our Lord and master, who had so little share of worldly goods, was very thankful to God for whatever happened to him. Let us all then look into our Lord's life, and observe how he behaved, whereby we may be more fully convinced, how pure and holy we ought to live, if we would walk worthy of our Christian vocation.

Let us further ask ourselves, what sort of life we ought to lead, who by our admission to this high calling have such extraordinary assistance, from the Holy Spirit. Every one, who is a member of Christ, has from God a promise of the Holy Ghost to assist him in his duty. Nay, our Saviour has given us his holy spirit, not only to stand by and support us, but also to be *in us*, as a principle of life, to dwell within us, to take our souls and bodies for his habitation; so that every true Christian may, in the most proper sense, be said to be *a temple of God* †, a tabernacle where the Holy Spirit is pleased to inhabit. What obligations then are laid upon us, to keep ourselves holy and undefiled, both as to soul, and body? What glorious things are expected from us? What excellent attainments ought we to make in every virtue and grace, who have a divine power within us, to strengthen us in all difficulties, to support us under all trials and temptations, and to carry us on to the most noble undertakings and performances?

Lastly, let us ask ourselves, what kind of life should he lead, who is called out of this world,
and

* Matt. 8. 20.

† 1 Cor. 3. 16.

and has his name enrolled among the citizens of the next ; who by his profession declares himself * *to be a stranger and a pilgrim here, and to look for an abiding and continuing city, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?* doth it become such to live as many do, who profess Christianity ? to be so wholly intent upon the business and designs of this earth, as if we were always to live here ? To make it the work of our lives to be contriving and projecting for our secular conveniencies or delights, and but very seldom lift up our minds to God, and attend the concerns of our everlasting state ? Can this be thought a conversation becoming one, who bears the character of a Christian ? Certainly, no : He that hath laid up his treasures in heaven, will not be much concerned about the treasures of this earth. A Christian should fit loose from the world, and all the vanities of it. He should use it as a man in a journey doth an inn, for his present accommodation and refreshment, but not to abide there. Heaven should be the place to which all our thoughts and studies should tend, where all our designs and pursuits should be directed. And whatever becomes of us here, whether our lot is poverty or riches, health or sickness, a splendid fortune, or low and mean circumstances, it should be indifferent to us, so as we get but to heaven at last. Let us consider, that though we are allowed by our gracious God to make use of all things here, that tend to make our abode tolerably easy and comfortable ; yet heaven is our home ; that is the country we are in pursuit of, and for the sake of which, we profess to be Christ's disciples. † *That is the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.* Would we therefore walk suitably to our Christian vocation, let us mind *that*. Let us live like men of another world.

* Heb. 11. 13, 16.

† Phil. 3. 14.

world. Let God, heaven, and the things above, have our hearts, our desires, our affections, while this world hath our bodies. By this means we shall not only secure to ourselves this everlasting, never fading inheritance, which is the end of our faith, and the hope of our calling; but we shall also make the best provision possible for a happy life, even in this world; for Christ has solemnly promised us, that if we *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all the other things we need, shall be added unto us.*

DISCOURSE CX. Bp. Moor.

Of perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Cor. 7. 1.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

ST. Paul, to support his apostolical power, and to suppress and extirpate some very malignant and dangerous opinions that then prevailed, which were likely to subvert the church he had lately planted, writes this and the former epistle to the *Corinthians*, full of affection, wisdom and piety. And it is observable, that at the same time he requires us to believe the mysteries of the gospel, he commands us to pay obedience to all its laws, joining a good life with faith in Christ. Our faith
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without charity will prove ineffectual ; because an increase in divine knowledge obliges us to abound in works of charity, purity and holiness. In some verses before the text, the apostle exhorts them to leave the company of *unbelievers and idolaters* ; because they were *become the temple of the living God*. He thought it neither safe nor suitable, for his new converts, who had renounced their vain and impious opinions, and reformed their scandalous manners, still to converse with those, who retained their gross errors, and continued in the practice of their old sins. He could no way approve of their associating with idolaters, when they had with so much reason refused to worship false Gods ; nor hear the profane talk, or behold the immodest behaviour of the unbelieving. Having therefore, says he, these most inestimable promises, that God will make us temples for himself to dwell in ; that he will be our father, and we shall be his children ; let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, from the sins we have been guilty of, in our heart, wills and bodies ; growing more perfect by the divine assistance, in the practice of all the Christian graces and duties of holiness, out of a deep and sincere fear and reverence of God.

It may be observed, that the apostle here supposes the *Corinthians* to be in a holy state and condition ; and he exhorts them still to endeavour after greater perfection. They must abound in every good work, and grow in grace ; not only add one virtue to another till all are attained, but to improve in every single virtue. To entitle us to a right to this holy state, we must believe that God is ; that we receive our beings, souls, and bodies from him ; that we are preserved by his providence, subsist by his bounty, and that he bestows on us all things necessary for our life, or to promote our happiness. And when the faculties and powers of
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our nature, had been corrupted and impaired, by the transgression of our first parents, God sent his only son *Jesus Christ*, to lay down his life to save ours; and by the inestimable merit of his death and passion, to procure the pardon of God for our sins, and to restore us to his favour. Wherefore we who have been rescued from the guilt, the dominion, and punishment of our sins, by the effusion of the blood of Christ, are under the highest obligations to pay an entire obedience to the author of our beings, and to the redeemer of our forfeited lives. So that if we are true members of this holy state; the love and fear of God, and of his son *Jesus Christ*, will be the governing principle of our hearts, and have a powerful influence over all our actions, to promote his glory, and preserve our interest in his favour. The necessary conditions then of a holy life are, that we diligently and carefully instruct ourselves in all the duties of it; and that we faithfully and sincerely practise what we find to be our duty, and make what proficiency we can therein.

But to render this discourse the more instructive, it may not be amiss to reflect on some errors, into which persons have fallen with respect to this state of holiness. As some have presumed their souls to be in a safe condition without any true grounds, so others have despaired of God's favour, without any just reason; I will therefore mention some sorts of persons, who have no pretence to the favour and mercy of God, or but very little; whose case is very doubtful and dangerous. And they can never pretend any claim to a holy state of life, who have no holiness at all. Such are those who openly profess infidelity, who reject and despise both religion and virtue; who rashly and without consideration, reason, or proof, say in their heart, *there is no God*; who would have it supposed,

posed, that the heavens and the earth, the effects of infinite wisdom, were produced, and do still continue, meerly by chance or fate; without any wise mind or being, to govern and direct them. That they themselves are under a fatal necessity; although they have the certain experience of their own liberty. And with regard to spiritual things, they are so stupid and senseless, as to think prayers, praises, and other parts of divine worship, to be so unprofitable, that they neither desire, nor would be thankful, for the mercy and favour of God. But rather chuse to give themselves up to all ungodliness and uncleanness; not only to make a mock at sin, but to commit it with greediness; and to use the very breath they receive from God, to blaspheme and defy him. Again,

They, who, though they do not publickly declare for atheism and infidelity, yet having no true religion at the bottom; such as these can have no right to this holy state. Their religious profession does not proceed from the sincere love of God, but from their worldly interest. They do not live according to the rules of the gospel, but only make a shew of doing so, thereby to gain reputation among men, and advance their secular interest. They may draw near to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are removed far from him. Nor can they either be secure of being in God's favour, who having honest and good intentions, are yet frequently overcome by temptations; the sensual appetite generally prevailing over their holy and good inclinations. For can we seriously think God will accept of our repentance, when at the next temptation and opportunity, we again commit the same crime. If sin has dominion over us, it will be impossible that our souls should be a suitable dwelling, for God's holy spirit to inhabit; and yet
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God requires no more of us, than he enables us to perform. If we heartily pray for the divine assistance, if we carefully watch to avoid all occasions of sin, sincerely and resolutely oppose temptations, we shall be able to mortify and subdue all fleshly lusts and vile affections.

Lastly, there is no ground to encourage men to think their spiritual condition is good and acceptable to God, who customarily allow themselves, to commit any one heinous sin. There are many sins of so malignant a nature, that God has declared he will exclude those who habitually practise them, from the kingdom of heaven. I do not mean, when men are in a great passion, or suddenly surprized ; but the habit of any deadly sin. The malicious invention of a falsehood, to spoil a man's good name ; a deliberate perjury, to rob him of his estate ; to plot and compass in cold blood, the murder of our neighbour ; any of these sins are so heinous as to forfeit the interest we had in God's favour. For if we will please God, we must render to him, not only sincere, but equal and universal obedience to all his laws ; so that all who commit sin with reluctancy of conscience, and reflect upon their past folly with grief and tears, but yet do afterwards relapse into the same sins again ; though of such it may be said, that they are the best among bad men, and that there is that hopes of them, yet they are not arrived to that goodness God requires.

By the constant practice of piety, all the actions and duties of religion will be more easy to be performed, and rendered more pleasant and delightful to us. For humbly and earnestly to beg of God the pardon of our sins, who alone can forgive them ; and that he would enable us to live innocently and to die peaceably, who has the power of life and death in his hands. To testify the
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sincere gratitude of our souls, by magnifying the power, admiring the wisdom, and adoring the goodness of God ; our best friend, our greatest benefactor, and our most compassionate father. To do all the good, and shew all the mercy we can to our neighbours ; to preserve purity, patience, and contentment in our souls ; holiness and righteousness in our whole conversation ; are deeds which carry with them quiet and satisfaction of mind, and leave behind them fountains of pleasures and joys forever flowing.

The ease and delight which arises from an habitual course of piety and virtue, are the most powerful motives for our persevering in a godly life to the end ; and the greatest security against relapsing into our former wickedness. When a long custom of holy living has vanquished all the difficulties which attend the beginning of it, and the remembrance of a man's good works makes his conscience serene and joyful ; the heavenly virtues he has acquired, will be as so many guards and preservatives against his falling into sin. His humility will secure him from presuming too much on his own strength. His experience of God's help and favour in former troubles, will make him resist the allurements of unlawful pleasures ; and patiently to bear any afflictions, rather than comply with what is evil. The sense of religion and humanity deeply rooted in his mind, will oblige him in his whole conduct, to have a regard to truth, justice, equity and compassion. The benignity of his nature will constantly dispose him to put the fairest and best constructions on mens actions ; to excuse if not commend them, so far as is consistent with truth and their good. And as he never can flatter or encourage men in great faults, so neither will he morosely censure their little infirmities. But

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It may be now proper to endeavour the removing of some scruples that perplex some honest persons minds, and cause them to doubt, whether they be in the favour of God ; and which makes them despair of arriving to such degrees of perfection, as will fit and qualify them for the kingdom of heaven. They think that if they stood right with their God, they should be more sensible of their spiritual improvements, and find greater peace, serenity and joy, upon the performance of their religious duties. To this I answer ; that the want of delight in God's service, sometimes proceeds from the indisposition of the body, and not the fault of the mind. And God will no more punish men for bodily indisposition, which they cannot help, than for malignant diseases, which they can neither prevent nor cure. Besides, providence may permit holy men to be thus troubled, for the exercise of their faith, the tryal of their patience, and the encrease of their trust in God ; who will at last amply reward their godliness and probity. Let us but continue stedfast in the practice of our duty, and tho' at present it may not be so delightful to us, yet we need not doubt of the love of God, nor of our progress towards heaven. By the constant use of fervent prayers and pious meditations, we shall grow stronger and firmer in faith and charity ; tho' we may not sometimes so sensibly feel and discern it. For tho' we are sure that plants and vegetables grow, yet it is not perceptible to our senses.

Others object, that they despond of arriving to such a pitch of virtue, as is related of some good people. And that they observe in scripture, that an unsinning obedience is made the terms of everlasting life ; for our Saviour commands us to *be perfect, as our father which is in heaven is perfect* ; who is infinitely good and perfect. To the first difficulty, I answer ; that tho' they may never rise to such

such a height of virtue as many others have done, yet their souls may be in a safe condition. Because there will be different degrees of honour in the celestial mansions; *one star will shine above another star in glory.* And they who shall not sit on the right hand of God, may yet be admitted to a less degree of honour. The failings of *Noah, David, Hezekiah, St. Peter,* and other eminent saints, who loved and served God with all their powers, are recorded in scripture, as a caution to the best men, not to be too secure; and as an encouragement to the weak and feeble, but sincere worshippers of God, not to despair. But then bold and presumptuous sinners must not from hence think to offend heaven without danger. For tho' God will not *quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed;* that is, he will not discourage nor reject the least degrees of sincerity; yet he will smite hardened and profane criminals with a rod of iron. There will be no pity nor commiseration left for those who defy almighty power, and despise immense goodness, without a very deep and unfeigned repentance.

As to those passages of scripture, which seem to make unfinning obedience the condition of obtaining everlasting life, it must be observed, that there are other places in the same inspired writers, which soften and qualify the rigour of divine justice, that seems to be contained in them, and by which they ought to be interpreted and explained. Thus *St. James* affirms, *that whosoever keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all;* he also says, *that in many things we offend all;* and exhorts Christians, *to confess their faults one to another.* And *St. John*, who assures us that *he who committeth sin is of the devil;* and that *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin;* he likewise declares, *that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* But we must never put such a sense upon

any passage of scripture as is repugnant to the truth of God, contained in the scripture ; nor fix an interpretation on the inspired writers, as to make them contradict themselves ; nor yet admit of any exposition, that puts men upon a level with our blessed Lord, who was free from sin, without spot or blemish. I will now proceed to shew how, and in what manner, we may best promote our improvement and growth in grace. And first,

* “ Let us endeavour to obtain a meek and humble frame of spirit : In order to this, let us take a true value and estimation of ourselves, which is the proper and genuine notion of humility. We must consider our wants and imperfections ; what weaknesses we are guilty of, what graces we want, and how much we stand in need of the divine assistance, to enable us to do our duty. Let us give a constant attendance to the offices of religion, both public and private ; for these are the means appointed by God, to convey grace to men. There is a wonderful efficacy which attends the right performance of the duties of religion. For he who does this constantly and conscientiously, cannot possibly be habitually wicked. And tho’ the words which are read and preached unto us are the words of frail men, yet they are also the message and gospel of the great God of heaven and earth, the judge of all ; and whosoever carefully attends to, and treasures it up in their hearts, will not depart without a blessing.

We must also look frequently into the state and condition of our souls ; and set apart some certain times daily or weekly to examine ourselves, and see what advances we have made in the ways of religion and holiness ; what sins we have been guilty of, whether we grow better or worse ; and we are further to consider, that the concerns of our souls are our truest interest, and of the nearest importance to

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* Atterbury.

us, and upon the right care of which our eternal happiness depends. And therefore the knowledge of ourselves is what we should be most solicitous about. I am persuaded if these plain and easy rules were carefully and conscientiously practised, they would have a very great influence on our lives and conversations. To which I add, that we should entertain and cherish the motions of God's holy spirit, and when we find any good thoughts spring up in our minds, we should impress them on our memories, improve them by meditation, and transcribe them into our actions. We have daily new vices to mortify, virtuous dispositions to exercise and cultivate, temptations to resist, afflictions to encounter; and all these require the assistance of God's grace, and which is never wanting to those who ask it with faith, and employ it with diligence.

To direct us how we may know what our growth and proficiency in grace is, let us examine, whether our hatred against sin, and love to religion be encreased? Whether we are more zealous and affectionate in our devotions? Whether our passions are reduced to better order? Whether we can bear afflictions more patiently, and resist temptations more courageously? And whether we go forward or backward in the paths of virtue and holiness? To know this, let us but satisfy ourselves whether we yield a more ready, sincere obedience to the laws of God? Whether we perform our duty with more pleasure and delight than we have formerly done? Whether we bear a greater respect to all God's commands? And if so, then we may conclude, that we grow in grace, and that our souls are in a safe condition. This is the rule our Saviour laid down, to try our love to God. *If ye love me, says he, keep my commandments.* If we try our love to God, or our growth in grace by other marks, we may be easily mistaken. For we may take

the form, for the power of godliness. We may be very zealous in the devotional parts of religion, and very remiss in the practical. And therefore the best way to make a true judgment of our growth in grace, is to consider whether our virtuous habits grow stronger? Whether our sobriety, justice and charity are more apparently evident to ourselves and others? Whether we are more desirous to do all the good we can; more ready to forgive injuries; more inclined to love our enemies; more exact and punctual in our dealings; more conscientious in the discharge of our several and respective duties; more sober and temperate in the government of ourselves? These are sure and certain signs by which we may be satisfied, whether we grow in grace, and are influenced by the principles of a lively and vital religion; *He that doth righteousness is righteous.* This means an habitual, and not only one act of righteousness; for a wicked man may do some brave and good actions, from a principle of generosity; and yet may have neither religion nor grace, in his soul.

But we must not expect that even in good men, every religious act should exceed those they have before performed. Or, that our proficiency in grace should be so speedy, as to be discerned in every act, in every single instance of duty. No; our improvement in goodness, proceeds by slow steps and insensible degrees; like the shade on a dial, which is always in motion, tho' not presently visible to the eye. A good man has not at all times the same disposition of mind, nor temper of body; nor can he be always equally intent upon the performance of his duty. We must therefore have regard to the general course and tenor of our lives, and consider more particularly our improvement in those graces we have had occasion to exercise; and if we carefully and truly make this enquiry, we shall soon discover

cover the condition of our souls, and whether we grow in grace or not. Let us then proceed from one degree of grace to another. Let us improve in all manner of Christian virtues and habits, and demonstrate the reality of our growth in grace, by a good life and conversation; like a good tree which bringeth forth fair and great plenty of fruit. Let us not make a bare profession of religion, but proceed to abound more and more, in every good work; daily growing more pious towards God, more careful in governing ourselves, and more charitable towards our neighbour. For he who doth not love his neighbour whom he hath seen, how should he love God, whom he hath not seen?"

It may be of good use to recommend to you some method and order in your whole conduct; and this consists in allotting proper and suitable seasons, both for the exercise of devotion, and managing the affairs of this world. This will much contribute to guard us against temptations to sin, and hinder us from omitting the great duties of religion. Let sincerity, integrity and perseverance in our duty, at all times influence us to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Let the fear, reverence and love of God, not the ostentation, or praise of men, prevail on us to persevere in the practice of true religion. Let our obedience be entire, and equally extend to all the divine precepts. Let neither riches, honours, sensual pleasures, nor the evil customs of the world, tempt us to think that any of God's commands are small and inconsiderable, or entice us wilfully to transgress any of them. Let us be constantly proceeding and advancing higher in our Christian state; for religion and virtue consists in action, and we ought to be pressing forward to obtain the prize. But if we hide our talents and do not improve them; if we go backward, or do but stand still; our holy dispositions will relent, decay

and wither ; and possibly before we can recover ourselves, the door may be shut, and we find no entrance. — May it therefore be our great and constant work to subdue and extirpate pride, vanity, malice, anger and lust, on this side the grave. May all sins die in us, before we come to die ourselves ; and may our souls, having vanquished their deadly enemies, supported on the wings of faith and charity, ascend to the glorious regions above. May we add “ to our faith, virtue ; to virtue, knowledge ; to knowledge, temperance ; to temperance, patience ; to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity.” So that these graces and virtues may forever flourish and abound in us.

DISCOURSE CXI. *Atterbury.*

Of walking circumspectly, redeeming the time.

Ephes. 5. 15. 16.

— *Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ; redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

THE *Ephesians* being surrounded with enemies on all sides, and greatly tempted to apostatise from the Christian religion ; the apostle exhorts them to be exceeding cautious in their words and actions, and to behave with so much prudence and circumspection, that they might neither wilfully expose themselves to those dangers and persecutions which

which threatened them; nor yet give occasion of offence to their brethren, by any scandalous compliances, either in matters of faith or practice. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.* And what was said to them is applicable to all Christians. The true meaning of which is; That we take great care to live up to the rules of piety and devotion, justice and honesty, temperance and sobriety. That we perform our duty to God, our neighbour and ourselves, with that diligence, circumspection, and exactness, as becomes men who are fully persuaded of the truth of that religion which they profess; and the certainty of those rewards, which they expect hereafter. That we recommend Christianity to others, in a loose and atheistical age, not only by making an open and resolute profession of its faith, but by transcribing its precepts into our lives and conversations: by demonstrating to the world, that religion and virtue, notwithstanding the degeneracy of mankind, and the almost universal corruption of manners, are more than bare names, having still a real existence in the world; and also by representing the beauty of holiness, the charms of a good and virtuous life, the wonderful pleasure and delight of a quiet and contented mind, and the mixed joy and satisfaction, which proceeds from a conscience void of offence; and by endeavouring all we possibly can, to allure others to the practice of religion.

This is a brave and generous design, agreeable to the spirit of true Christianity, being a spark of that heavenly zeal, which inspired the breasts of its first professors; and which would make more lasting impressions on mens minds, and more proselytes to our religion, than all those numerous volumes of controversy, which have so much disturbed the churches peace. A profane and subtle wit will

never want nice distinctions to evade the force of the most solid arguments; nor yet art to colour over the most absurd opinions, with appearances of reason. But when he observes the exact purity and holiness of the devout Christian, his heroic courage and magnanimity, his entire resignation to the will of God, and his fervent zeal and devotion; these are such prevailing arguments, as will not only allure the affections, but convince the judgment; and make men acknowledge, that such excellent effects, must proceed from a divine and supernatural cause. This is that exact and circumspect walking recommended by the apostle; that *demonstration of the spirit*, which never fails to produce suitable affections in the minds of those who attend to it. — We must also live up to the rules of prudence and discretion. Our behaviour ought not to be morose and austere. Nor should we indulge ourselves in those sensual pleasures and enjoyments, which are ~~harmful~~, but we ought to make such a prudent and discreet use of our Christian liberty, as may render ourselves easy and agreeable to ourselves and others: and let all men see, that we know how to enjoy the pleasures and good things of this world, and yet to have our affections fixed on the more solid and durable delights of heaven; and enjoy those *pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore*.

The great art of a Christian, is to know how to want and how to abound. To manage discreetly a prosperous or adverse condition. To conduct himself in all the various changes and chances of this life; not only with honesty and integrity, but with such prudence, moderation, and temper, as may recommend religion to others, and render it lovely and amiable in the sight of all men. For how many good and honest men are there, who would not willingly do any unjust or wicked thing; and yet by an indiscreet behaviour they give offence to such

as cannot distinguish between the virtues of the Christian, and the weakness and frailty of the man ; and so bring an evil report upon the ways of virtue and holiness ? They are either too strict and exact in some circumstantials, indifferent in their own nature ; too stiff and reserved in conversation, and so represent religion as a melancholy course of life, which deprives us of all reasonable gratifications of our senses : or else they run into the contrary extreme, and indulge themselves in all manner of sensual enjoyments ; by which they are exposed to such violent temptations, as very much hazard their integrity, and tend to ensnare other men ; who are hereby encouraged to take such liberties and licentious courses, as are utterly inconsistent with a Christian life. We should therefore have a watchful eye and a particular regard to those temptations, to which we are most exposed. We must endeavour by all lawful and prudent means, if possible, to prevent falling into any dangerous temptations. A Christian should therefore consider, what sins he is most inclined to, by constitution, education, or custom ; which are his darling and bosom sins ; and to strive to subdue these, and to avoid all occasions leading to the commission of them. It is no great commendation to be good, when we are not tempted to do otherwise. But to resist the allurements of vice, to be temperate at a plentiful table, to be chaste when solicited by a prostitute beauty ; to be zealous and devout in a profane and atheistical age ; these are such instances of true virtue, as can only proceed from that wisdom which is divine. Lastly,

Walking circumspectly imports the abstaining from all appearance of evil. We must not allow ourselves in any thought, word, or act displeasing to God ; or that may give just occasion of scandal and offence to our neighbour. We must endeavour to

serve God in every instance of duty, thro' the whole course of our lives; and not allow ourselves in the breach of any one of his laws. We are not to enquire what is the lowest degree of virtue and holiness, and to be only just so good as to bring us to heaven; but we must labour to perform exactly all parts of our duty; and to the utmost of our power and ability to serve God, at all times and in all places. It is our duty to strive continually to grow in grace, to improve in virtuous habits, and to come as near to perfection in this world as is possible. We must every day grow more devout towards God, more kind and beneficent to our neighbours, more prudent and discreet in all our words and actions; that so we may be the better prepared for a future state of glory and immortality. This is the most noble and highest attainment of a Christian; and is a work of great care and difficulty. Indeed, there is no undertaking of any great moment, that can be accomplished without a serious attention of thought, and much pains and diligence. But tho' there is some difficulty in working out our salvation, yet God has not left us without strength to perform what he expects; for he will afford us the assistance of his grace to prosper our endeavours, and render them effectual. I will now propose some considerations, which may be of use, to engage us to walk circumspectly, and to lead a life the most exact and perfect. And

Let us consider, that what God has made to be our duty, is the truest perfection of our natures. The end of God's creating the world was to communicate happiness to his creatures. He therefore gave such laws as were most suitable and convenient to their natures; such as had a rational tendency to promote their happiness. They were not the arbitrary dictates of his will, nor designed merely to shew his power and dominion; but they were such

as demonstrated God's infinite justice and goodness, as well as his power ; and such as disposed and qualified men for that glory and happiness, which he proposed as the reward of their obedience. Thus the design of the laws of the gospel, is to reduce men, as near as possible, to that rational and perfect way of living, they were placed in before the fall ; to improve their rational faculties in discovering the most sublime and excellent truths ; to mortify and subdue their passions, bringing them under the dominion of reason ; by taking their affections off, from admiring and doting upon sensual enjoyments, and placing them on things above ; by teaching men to place their chief happiness in the contemplation of God, the fountain of all good ; by adoring his excellencies, perfections and wonderful works, and observing his laws, which are the transcripts of his original goodness, justice and holiness. Such a life as this must indeed at first, be attended with much difficulty, till our evil habits are rooted out ; and then it will grow every day more easy and grateful, and we shall at last take pleasure and delight in the performance of our duty. Again :

Let us consider, that God has made a clear discovery of his will by the gospel, the laws and precepts of which are so excellent, that they tend very much to render our duty more easy, and to assist us in the practice of it. The precepts of governing the first motions of our souls ; of stifling anger and revenge in the birth ; of overcoming evil with good ; of not coveting the property of our neighbour ; of not indulging so much as a lascivious look, but of making a covenant with our eyes, and avoiding all appearance of evil ; all these are such excellent injunctions as surpass the constitutions and sanctions of all other law-makers. Hence we have good reason to conclude, that God

expects we should bring forth the fruits of a holy life, in proportion to the light that is afforded us. And he has given us the perfect example of our blessed Lord, who by a holy life demonstrated the possibility of our performing what he requires. We have besides, the promise of God's holy spirit to help our infirmities, and enable us to do our duty. And as we have under the gospel the more plentiful effusions of God's grace, therefore we shall be inexcusable, if we receive this grace in vain, or abuse it to wantonness; if we do not employ our talent to attain a higher pitch of holiness and virtue. For God will call us to an account for all our thoughts, words and actions; and this consideration alone, if heartily believed and seriously regarded, must needs have a wonderful influence upon us. For how circumspectly should we behave, could we behold the visible presence of God, looking down from heaven, to observe all our actions? But how much more careful and exact ought we to be in all our actions, and to cast out of our minds every vain and wicked thought; when we are assured that God not only views our actions, but knows even the most secret thoughts of our heart? That at the great day of accounts they will be all written in legible characters, and exposed to the view of men and angels? Who can express the horror and confusion, that will attend the sinner, when his private sins shall be published openly, and the secrets of his heart revealed? For tho' he might conceal his sins from men, yet they cannot escape the all-seeing eye of God.

Let us also consider, that our future rewards will be in proportion to our holiness in this life. As one star differs from another in glory, so shall we in heaven; according to those degrees of perfection which we have here attained, will be our happiness hereafter. How earnestly then ought we to strive

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to exceed each other in virtue and holiness; to improve our graces, to be fruitful and abound in all good works, since we shall hereby obtain higher degrees of glory? How carefully should we avoid every idle word, every unseemly thought, every evil way; since every sin we commit, will deprive us of some part of our future happiness; of those inestimable treasures, which will be the reward of those who serve God? A felicity too great to be understood by us in this life, too excellent to be comprehended, while we are in these earthly tabernacles; for neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the happiness which God hath prepared for them that love him.—I will now lay down some rules to direct us in the government of our lives and conversations.

And we should enter upon no business of moment, without consideration. This duty is frequently recommended to us, in the holy scriptures; for did men seriously think on their ways, they would *have respect unto all God's commandments*. Men are so taken up with the affairs of this world, that they will not give themselves time or leisure to weigh impartially and deliberately the truths which are proposed to them, and the powerful motives to engage the practice of them. Serious consideration is a good beginning, and will conduce much to the better regulation of our lives. It is absolutely necessary, to a conscientious discharge of our duty, that we duly consider the consequences of every important action we perform. For into how many indiscretions, sins, and follies, doth inconsideration betray men? Let us therefore use our utmost endeavours to inform our consciences, as to what is our duty; and be careful not to act contrary to the dictates of them. We should also frequently look back upon our past actions, and recollect what we

have done ; that we may know the true state and condition of our souls, and how we stand with God ? And whether we are prepared to give up our accounts with comfort, at the great tribunal ? This rule, if duly and conscientiously practised, would be of excellent use to us. Let us begin and end all actions with fervent prayers to God, that he would enlighten and inform our understandings in the truth ; teach us our duty, and enable us by his grace to perform it. Prayer to God is the most effectual means to incline him to give us his help and assistance ; and to beget in our souls the graces we pray for. I now proceed to the other part of the text, to *redeem the time, because the days are evil.*

Time is properly said to be redeemed, when we improve all opportunities to advance God's glory, the good of our neighbour, and the welfare of our own souls. When we suffer not a moment to be lost, by sloth, intemperance, or worldly care. Our time is a talent which God has intrusted us with, to the end that we should give him an exact account of it. And tho' he is a loving and indulgent father, to those who obey him and keep his commandments ; yet he is a severe and just judge, towards those who offend and break his laws. Was this world our home, and we were not to be called to an account for what we do here ; we might then gratify and please our fancies, and spend our time in sensual satisfactions. But since this life, this small span of time, is allotted us to provide for eternity ; it much concerns us to make a right use of it ; and not to spend it in heaping up riches, in pursuing after honours and preferments, or indulging ourselves in pleasure and voluptuousness. Alas ! our time was intrusted with us not to spend in sin and vanity ; but in laying up our treasure in heaven, in seeking after an immortal crown, and obtaining those

those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

Our time in this life is short, if we consider the business we have to do, or in comparison of eternity. The business of salvation is a work of difficulty, and requires more time than we generally imagine. The subduing our lusts, the breaking off vicious habits, and introducing virtuous ones, will require our utmost care and diligence: and therefore we are commanded to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling; to strive to enter in at the strait gate; to give diligence to make our calling and election sure.* Words which imply the difficulty of the task. Our time is also short in respect of eternity: for what is threescore and ten years, if compared with a duration that will never end? But then how many are cut off in the flower of their youth, and never reach to that age? Besides, what allowances must we make for eating, drinking and sleeping; for the business and pleasures of life? I may add also, for our sins, which have no small share. And when all these are deducted, how little portion? how few moments of our lives remain to serve God, and make provision for our eternal welfare? And as time is short, so is it uncertain. We know not when we may be called away; whether at the first or second watch of the night. We are only masters of the present moment, and cannot promise ourselves a longer duration. Our bodies are subject to so many diseases and accidents, that this night our souls may be required of us. And when once the present time is past, it can never be recalled.

So that upon redeeming our time, the everlasting welfare of our souls and bodies depends. And if we do not improve our time in this life, we shall be miserable to all eternity. Who then that believes he has an immortal soul, and seriously considers
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what eternity means, would venture to trifle away time, which so nearly concerns him? And yet we find by experience, that too many are guilty of it. When we come to die, we would give all the world was it ours, for a little of that time we so negligently squander away. We shall then wish we had spent that time in doing good, in praying, hearing, reading and meditating on God's word; which we have trifled away for things of no moment. Then all the gaudy scenes of this world will vanish, earthly enjoyments will appear in their proper light; and nothing will afford us true comfort and satisfaction, but the reflections of a well spent life, and those few hours we have employed in the duties of religion. The time we have wasted in heaping up riches, in pursuing honours and pleasures, will but add to our grief and torment. So that should sickness and death take us unprovided, how sad a condition shall we be in! It will be the greatest torment in hell for men to reflect upon their folly, in neglecting those opportunities God has given them to provide for their souls. It will sting them to the heart to think that they have lost heaven and eternal happiness, for the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world, which afforded them so little satisfaction. They will then lament that they chose to spend their time in any employment or diversion, rather than in the duties of religion; and preferred the fleeting amusements of this world, before the solid durable comforts of a holy life.

Another reason why we should be careful to redeem time is, *because the days are evil*. The times we live in are so wicked and debauched, that it is very difficult to resist the temptations we meet with. We have some among us who are not satisfied with leading wicked lives themselves, but make it their business to tempt others to sin. The glory
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of these men is, to ensnare the temperate into a debauch, to put the modest man out of countenance, to ridicule sobriety and religion. We live in the dregs of time, in the worst age of the world, when the generality of men seem to have cast off all fear of God and sense of religion; and to have given themselves up to the gratification of their sensual appetites and desires. So that it is very difficult to avoid the manifest temptations to vice and luxury, which continually surround us. But as this life is a state of warfare, we must be constantly upon our guard, and be prepared to resist them. We must be sober and vigilant, that we may be able to repel all the fiery darts of the devil and his emissaries. And that we may the better perform this duty, it will be proper for us to observe the following directions.

Let our thoughts be always employed about some lawful business, that the devil may not find us idle. For whilst the husbandman slept, the evil one came, and sowed the tares. Let us not spend our time in what does not concern us; but employ it in the most necessary work. We must first attend the worship of God, the duties of religion, and the concerns of our souls, before we make provision for the body. If we first *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, all other things will be added unto us ||. Let us not spend too much time, even in lawful recreation; sports and amusing conversation are apt to engross our affections and time; and by introducing habits of sloth and ease, unfit us for business of more importance. Let us frequently meditate on death, judgment, heaven and hell; and imagine we hear the trumpet sounding, and the voice of the archangel proclaiming, *arise ye dead, and come to judgment*. A due and constant practice of these few rules, would have a happy influence

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|| Mat. 6. 33.

on our lives and conversations ; it would imprint on our minds such an awe of the supreme being, as to engage us to an universal obedience to the laws of God, and a diligent redeeming of the time for the future.

But some will say, that they have not time for the duties of religion, having large families to provide for ; and that their laborious callings take up most of their time and thought, to get things necessary for the support of life. To these I answer, that the business of our calling is an act of religion ; and God is as well pleased with a man who is honestly discharging his duty, in the stations he has placed him in ; as if he was continually upon his knees offering up prayers to heaven. But no man is so engaged in business, as not to find some time in every day to perform his devotions ; even in the field, or in the shop, he may lift up his heart to heaven, in fervent and pious ejaculations ; to acknowledge God's goodness, and beg supplies for his necessities. Besides, there is one day in seven set apart on purpose for the duties of religion ; when men have nothing to do but to worship God, and take care of their immortal souls. And how inexcusable shall we be, if we neglect those opportunities of serving God ?

Let all of us then set about the practice of this absolutely necessary duty. And if for the time past we have walked according to the course of this world, and have had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh ; let it be our chief care and business for the future, to make our calling and election sure. To trim our lamps with the oil of good works, and furnish ourselves with the wedding garments ; and so to employ the talents God has intrusted us with, that after we have given up our accounts, we may have that comfortable sentence pro-

pronounced unto us; *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

DISCOURSE CXII. Abp. Tillotson.

The faith of *Abraham*, in offering *Isaac*.

Heb. 11. 17, 18, 19.

By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son: of whom it was said that in Isaac, shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

FROM these words I propose to consider the example of *Abraham*, the constancy of whose faith and chearful obedience, even in the most difficult cases, is remarkable above all others. For, at God's command he left his kindred and country, not knowing whither he should go; by which eminent act of obedience, he declared himself wholly at God's disposal and ready to follow him. But this trial was not to be compared, with the command of God in the text, to offer up his only son; and yet such was the immutable steadfastness of his faith, and the perfect submission of his obedience, that he made not the least hesitation at it; but out of reverence and regard to the divine command, he readily and chearfully obeyed

ed God therein. By faith, *Abraham*, when he was tried, offered up *Isaac*. There are two difficulties concerning this matter. For it seems contrary to scripture, and to reason, that God should tempt any man; because, he knows what every man will do, without trying their faith and obedience. It seems contrary to scripture, which says, God tempts no man. But though it is true, that God tempts no man to commit sin, yet he may try their faith and obedience with great difficulties, to make them the more illustrious. Thus *Abraham*, *Job*, and even our blessed Saviour was tempted. It also seems contrary to reason. But God does not try men for his own information, but to give an illustrious proof and example to others, of faith and obedience. And the excellency of *Abraham's* faith and obedience in this instance, will appear the more illustrious, if we consider the firmness, stedfastness, and constancy of his faith and resolution, notwithstanding the objections against it, and the difficulty of the thing.

The firmness and stedfastness of his faith will appear, if we consider, that the objections against this command were enough to shake the strongest faith, and even to make a wise and good man doubt, whether the command was from God; namely, because of the horrid nature of this command; the great scandal likely to follow upon it; and the consequence of which seemed to render void the former promise of God to *Abraham*. The horrid nature of the command, was, for a father to kill his own child. A thing most barbarous and unnatural; contrary to the law of nature, and to that kindness and affection, which God had planted in the hearts of parents towards their children; an affection so natural and strong, that many would redeem their children's lives, at the hazard of their own. It must therefore seem very strange,
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that God should command what was contrary to it; and it increased the horror of the fact, that his son was innocent, and was to be slain with his own hands. It would grieve the heart of any father, to give up his son to death, though never so undutiful and disobedient; how deep then must it affect *Abraham*, to give up his innocent son to death; as *Isaac* appears to be? God says, *that he was the son whom his father loved*. But that a father should be commanded not only to give up his son to death, but to slay him with his own hands; not only to be a spectator, but the actor in this tragedy: what good father, where nature was so hard pressed, but would have considered such a revelation, as the suggestion and illusion of an evil spirit, rather than the command of God? And yet *Abraham's* faith was such, as not to question this revelation of God.

And the grievous scandal likely to follow from it, was another great objection against it. The report of such an action, would in all appearance blemish the reputation, even of so good a man, with all sober considerate persons, who could not but censure him for a wicked and unnatural man. It was therefore a very hard case, for a man to be put to sacrifice at once, the two dearest things in the world, his son and his reputation. For who would believe, he could have an express revelation and command from God for it. The act had in appearance so much horror, that it was not easily credible, God should command it; so that the pretence of revelation for it, so far from excusing his fault, must have been esteemed an high aggravation of it, by adding the boldest impiety, to the most barbarous inhumanity. And the enemies of his religion might be ready to say, 'this is your excellent good man, the friend of God, who was so cruel an enemy to his son.' All this he probably
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considered; but it did not move him, being resolved to obey God, and leave it to his wisdom to provide against all the inconveniencies attending it.

But the strongest objection of all, was the horrible consequence of the thing, which seemed to clash with former revelations, and to make void the promise God had made to *Abraham*, 'that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed;' which promise we read in the text was expressly limited to *Isaac* and his posterity, who had then no son. This objection is really so cogent, that if *Abraham* had not full satisfaction about it, he might justly have questioned the truth of the revelation. But *Abraham's* faith was so strong, as not to be shaken by this. Hence appears the constancy of his resolution to obey God. For though he was firmly persuaded, that this command to kill his son, was really from God; yet to obey God in so difficult a case, as to kill his own and only son, whom he loved, in whom he placed all his hopes of a happy posterity, and with his own hands to destroy him and all his hopes together: This must be a strong faith, to engage a man to obedience in so difficult an instance. But what renders his obedience still more remarkable, is the deliberateness of the action. That his obedience might be the more glorious, God would have it done upon full consideration; and therefore bid him go to the mountain, three days journey from where he was, to offer up his son. Acts of virtue and obedience, are like sin and vice; the more deliberate the sin, the more calm and sedate the man is, when he commits it, the greater is the fault; for when done by surprize in the heat of temptation, there is some excuse for it. And so in acts of virtue and obedience, if attended with difficulty, the more deliberately they are done,
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the more virtue and greater praise, is due to them.

That *Abraham's* obedience might want nothing to heighten it, God seems on purpose to order so long a space, between the command and performance. He gives him time to consider and weigh the command, and every part of this difficult duty; he affords him an opportunity to reason, argue and debate the case; and for natural affection, flesh and blood, to raise all its forces against the resolution he had taken up. And we may easily imagine, what conflict this good man had within himself, the three days he travelled to the mountain; how his heart was ready to break betwixt his duty to God, and his affection to his child; and when he came thither, and all things were ready, the altar, the wood, the fire and the knife, it must needs wound him to the heart when his innocent son asked him, *where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* It must be a strong faith, a mighty resolution, that could make him hold out three days, against the assaults of his own nature, and the presence of his son; and yet this did not stagger him in his duty, but being strong in faith, he gave glory to God, by one of the most miraculous acts of obedience, that was ever required from any man.

But it will be proper to consider the reasonableness of *Abraham's* faith, and how he could satisfy himself, in so intricate perplexed a case. For his faith was not an obstinate stubborn persuasion, but the result of the wisest reasoning and soberest consideration. He counted, the word in the original is, he *reasoned* with himself, that God was able to raise him up from the dead. So that he debated the matter, and fully satisfied himself, concerning the objections and difficulties of the case; and being assured it was a divine command, he resolved to obey it. As to the horrid crime of slaying his innocent

nocent son, *Abraham* had no reason to scruple this, at the command of God; for he being the author of life hath power over it, and may take it away when he will, and make whom he pleaseth instruments to execute his command. It was indeed a hard case, considering natural affection; and therefore God did not permit it to be done. But God's right over the lives of men, and his authority to command any one to execute his pleasure in such a case, admits of no dispute. Though God hath planted strong affections in parents towards their children, yet he hath not excluded his own sovereign right. This he always excepts, and which removes the objections of injustice in the present case.

As to the scandal of it, that could be no great objection, at a time when parents had an absolute power over their children, and might put them to death without being accountable for it. Nay, in later times among the *Romans*, parents had a power of life and death over their children, and might sell them for slaves; so that this did not much stick with *Abraham*, it being then no unusual thing: and the command of God, who hath absolute power over the lives of his creatures, is certainly a just reason; for who need scruple doing that by God's command, which he might have done by his own authority, without being accountable to any but God. As to the objection, that the slaying of *Isaac* would overthrow the promise God had made to *Abraham*, that in *Isaac* his seed should be called; this seems to be the great difficulty, and here he uses his reason to reconcile the seeming contradiction; for he reasoned, that God was able to raise *Isaac* up from the dead, from whence also he had received him in a figure: plainly referring to the miraculous birth of *Isaac*, when his parents were past the age of having children; which

which was little less than a resurrection from the dead. So that *Abraham* reasoned thus ; that God who gave *Isaac* at first in so miraculous a manner, was able by another miracle to restore him to life again, after he was dead, and to make him the father of many nations. In his reasoning about this matter, he gives the utmost weight to whatever might tend to vindicate the truth and faithfulness of God's promise, and to make his revelations consistent with one another. Having thus explained the words, and cleared up some difficulty and obscurity in them, I will proceed to make some observations from what has been said, that may be of use to us. And

Hence it appears, that human nature is capable of clear and full satisfaction, concerning a divine revelation. For had not *Abraham* been fully assured, that this was a command from God, he would certainly have spared his son ; and its most reasonable to believe, that those to whom God is pleased to reveal his will, are certainly assured thereof, or it would be in vain and to no purpose. Though we know not how this may be done, yet we may be sure, that God can work in the mind of man, a firm persuasion of the truth and certainty of a revelation coming from him. But then, he will never offer any thing to a man's belief, that plainly contradicts the natural and essential notions of his mind, for this would be to destroy his own work. For instance, we cannot suppose that God will reveal any thing which contradicts the essential perfections of the divine nature, for such a revelation would be a downright contradiction. The revelation which God made to *Abraham* concerning the sacrificing of his son, was by an audible voice, and he was fully satisfied, that it was from God. As this was not the first of many revelations God made to him, so he knew

knew by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and therefore *he* the more confided in the truth and goodness of God; and very probable, when God first appeared to *Abraham*, he shewed himself in so glorious a manner, as was sufficient to his conviction; which made him not stagger at this of sacrificing his son, being fully satisfied it was from God.

From hence I also observe the great and necessary use of reason, in matters of faith. *Abraham's* reason was a mighty strength and help to his faith. For if his reason had not reconciled these two revelations which seemed to clash, he could not possibly have believed them both to be from God; because this natural notion that God cannot contradict himself, every man more firmly believes, than any revelation whatever. *Abraham* in this strait reasoned with himself, that God was able to raise him from the dead. There are some persons of more zeal than knowledge, who clamour much against the use of reason, in matters of faith; but this is most unreasonable. For divine revelation doth not endow men with new faculties, but only proposes new objects to those they had before. Revelation is to be discerned by reason; for whatever God reveals he does it to our understanding, that we may judge of it. We are 'not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they are of God; for many false prophets are gone out into the world.' Many that falsely pretend to inspiration. But these pretenders can only be discovered by our reason, in comparing the evidence for the one and the other. This farther appears by considering the nature of faith, which is an assent of the mind to something revealed by God, grounded upon evidence; for no man can believe a thing, unless he has some reason to do so. For to be confident of a thing without reason is not faith, but an ob-

obstinate and presumptuous persuasion. This is still more evident, if we consider the method that must be used to convince any one of the truth of religion; which is to satisfy a man's reason by proper arguments, that the scriptures are a divine revelation, and that no other book can with equal reason pretend to be so. And therefore we must have recourse to reason, for the proof of our religion. Indeed,

The highest commendations that are given in scripture to any one's faith, are on account of the reasonableness of it. *Abraham's* faith is famous, because he reasoned himself into it, notwithstanding the objections to the contrary. Our saviour commended the centurion's faith, because he reasoned, that if he, who was himself under authority, could command those that were under him; much more could he that had a divine power and commission, do what he pleased by his word. And our Saviour so much admired his faith, as to say, *I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* Again, the apostles were divinely inspired, and yet the *Bereans* are commended, because they satisfied themselves in the reasons of their belief, before they assented to the doctrines delivered them, even by teachers that were certainly inspired. Nor were any reprov'd in scripture for their unbelief, but where sufficient reason and evidence was offered them. The *Israelites* were blamed for their infidelity, not till after such mighty wonders had been brought for their conviction. The *Jews* are not simply condemn'd for their unbelief, but for rejecting the clear evidence offered to them. *If I had not done amongst them, says our Saviour, the works which no other man did, they had not had sin.* In truth, there can be no greater prejudice to religion, than to decline the use of reason in such matters. If we have no reason for our religion, then it must

be unreasonable. Indeed, it is reason enough to say, that God hath revealed it, this being the strongest reason for our belief: But then we must be able to prove it. If we reject reason, we level the best religion in the world with the most absurd enthusiasm. We need desire no better evidence that any man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against reason, and thereby acknowledge that reason is against him; men may vilify reason as much as they please, but she generally hath her full revenge on all such.

From hence I farther observe, that God obligeth no man to believe plain and evident contradictions, as matters of faith. *Abraham* could not reasonably have believed this second revelation, to have been from God, had he not some way reconciled it with the first. For a man must not so submit his reason to divine revelation, as to believe God against God himself; some think they mightily oblige God, by believing plain contradictions; but this cannot be. He that made man a reasonable creature, will not like any one, who endeavours to make God himself appear unreasonable. Therefore no service, no obedience, no faith is acceptable to God, but what is reasonable. For he that can believe plain contradictions, may believe any thing the most absurd; because to such, truth and falsehood are all one. It may be also observed, that one great cause of the defect of men's obedience, is the weakness of their faith. If we believed the commands, the promises and threatnings of God, as firmly as *Abraham* did, what should we not do, or suffer, in obedience to him? If our faith was as strong and vigorous as his, the effects would be as great and conspicuous. If we were verily persuaded, that all the promises and threatnings of the gospel, will one day be made good; *what manner of persons should we be, in all holy conversation and godliness?* How would the thoughts of another world, raise us above the vanities

ties of this life ; secure us from the most powerful temptations that can assault us ; and make us prepare for that solemn account, which we must one day give to God the judge of all? It is the want of a firm and steady persuasion of these things, that makes our devotions dead and heartless ; our good resolutions weak and inconstant. This makes us an easy prey to every temptation. So that in proportion to the strength or weakness of our faith, our obedience to God will be more or less constant, uniform and perfect ; because faith is the great source and spring of all the virtues of a good life. Again,

Hence it appears how utterly inexcusable we are if we disobey the easy precepts of the gospel. The *yoke of Christ is easy, and his burthen light*, in comparison of God's former dispensations. God's command to *Abraham*, to sacrifice his son, was a hard saying, and who of us could have borne it? - But should God call us to the more difficult duties of self-denial, and suffering for truth and righteousness sake, we must, after *Abraham's* example not refuse to part with any thing, even life itself. And the comfort, support, and glorious rewards expressly promised to our obedience in such a case, is encouragement enough to make a difficult duty easy. For God will not suffer those who sincerely love him and his truth, to be tempted above what they are able. What God required of *Abraham*, he did not design should be executed ; but one great design was, to be a type and figure of that immense love and kindness, which he intended to all mankind in the sacrifice of his son, as a propitiation for the sins of the world. " That by this one sacrifice of himself once offered, he might perfect forever them that are sanctified, and obtain eternal redemption for us."

“ * Another observation I would make from what has been said, is, that true faith in God, never leads men to the practice of what is in its own nature immoral. Of this sort are the idolatries in the church of *Rome*, so destructive of all natural and revealed notions of God. As also the cruelties and barbarities practised by them, fundamentally destructive of all virtue, and of the eternal and unalterable differences of good and evil. Things commanded by the meer positive command of God, may no doubt be changed by the same authority; things contrary to that part of the law of nature, which is founded originally in the will of God, and not in the necessary essential nature of things, may be altered upon particular and extraordinary occasions, by the immediate and express command of God. But that part of the law of nature, which is founded not on will, but on the very existence of God, and on the essential, eternal, and immutable nature and relation of things; this in no circumstances is capable of any variation. For instance, that the life of an innocent person should be taken away by the authority of any power upon earth, is contrary to the law of nature; and yet, since the right which even an innocent person has to his life, is not founded in the essential nature of things, but meerly in the will and free gift of God; it is plain he may as justly appoint it to be taken away by any other means he pleases, as by a fever, or some other distemper. But had God commanded *Abraham* to forsake the worship of himself, and turn to idols; or commanded him to hate his innocent son, or to take delight in cruelty, barbarity, and tyranny; the command had been in its nature impossible and absurd. Thus the seven wicked nations of *Canaan* might, by a particular and immediate command of God, as justly be extirpated by the sword of the *Israelites*,

raelites, as by an earthquake, or lightning from heaven. But that without any express command from God, under a general pretence of being alone possessors of the truth, a perpetual, tyrannical enmity should be carried on against virtuous men of all nations, and a power established of changing even the nature of virtue and vice; this is a wickedness that never had an equal; and subverts fundamentally that part of the law of nature, which is founded, not on the will, but on the very being of God, on the necessary, essential, and eternal difference of good and evil.

The last observation I shall make, is, that faith, when spoken of in scripture as a moral virtue, never signifies meer belief, but always includes fidelity, or faithfulness. A faithful and stedfast adherence to such principles, even in times of greatest danger and difficulty, as are the foundation or ground of virtue and obedience. *Abraham believed God*; that is, he had faith and fidelity towards God, he firmly adhered to his principles, and acted steadily upon them in matters of the greatest tryal and difficulty. *He kept the faith that was committed to his charge, and therefore it was counted to him for righteousness*; that is, as being itself real righteous. From hence it is evident, what the writers of the new testament intend, when they tell us, that *Abraham*, tho' he was not justified by the works of the law, such as circumcision and the like, because this testimony was given of him before he was circumcised; yet the faith which justified him, was an active and steady principle of works of righteousness. And he was therefore justified by that faith, because it was such a faith, as *wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect*. The application they make of it to us, is, that only they *who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham*, are, in a religious, sense *Abraham's seed*. That is, they only shall

finally be accepted of God, whose faith is like his, a real principle of virtue and obedience. Otherwise, it matters little, whose name we are called by, or whose religion we profess. God is able of these stones, sooner than of impenitent and incorrigible sinners, to raise up children unto Abraham, and unto Christ.

DISCOURSE CXIII. *Atterbury.*

Of reason and religion.

Rom. 12. 1.

Which is your reasonable service.

BY reasonable service is here meant, such a rational way of worshipping almighty God; as agrees with the strictest notions of right reason. Such a worship as is most suitable for a pure and holy God to receive, and for man to offer; such as tends most to promote the glory of God, and to enable mens nature, by bringing them to such perfection in this world, as may qualify them for the blessedness of the next. It also signifies the service of our souls as well as bodies; of our minds and understandings, as well as our wills and affections. The whole man must be offered up a living sacrifice; and every power of our bodies, every faculty of our souls, must be employed in God's worship. But this will more evidently appear, by considering how just and reasonable the service is, which God requires of us in the gospel. And this is the assent
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of the understanding to the truths it contains. The obedience of our wills to the duties it enjoins. The zeal and fervour of our affections in the performance of them.

The truths contained in the gospel which require the assent of the understanding, are such as are evident by the light of nature ; or which may be collected from natural principles, by rational and plain inferences ; or else delivered down to us, by men inspired by the holy spirit. Thus it is most clear and certain to every sober enquirer, that there is one first cause of things, from whom all creatures derive their original ; that he is a being transcendently perfect. And from hence the wise and virtuous men of all ages conclude, that this *being*, who is invested with infinite wisdom and power does assuredly rule and govern the world, with the strictest justice, and most impartial equity. That having endued mankind with rational souls, and a liberty of determining their actions, either to good or evil ; he will certainly call them to account, and reward or punish them in another world, according to their works. To these truths, the very Heathens gave their assent. They easily collected by rational inferences, that this stupendous fabrick of the world must needs be the contrivance of some skilful artist ; and that such exquisite beauty and uniformity as is so visible in every part of it, must naturally be infinitely more beautiful and excellent in the author himself, than in any part of his work. They also considered the perfections of the soul, that ray of divinity which informs the whole body ; how many different operations it performs at the same time, having a power to reflect on its own actions, and by comparing of things, to make probable conjectures of what will come to pass. From these reflections they wisely concluded, that such wonderful effects, could not proceed from matter and motion ;

tion ; but that the soul must be a spiritual, thinking and immortal being, which will survive the body after it is dissolved and mouldered into dust ; and be accountable hereafter for all its transactions in this world. All this is evident from the light of nature and reason, and will gain the assent and belief of every serious, considerate person, as being what naturally results from the exercise of reason.

But what is most doubted of, is, whether the truths taught us by divine revelation, are also discoverable by the maxims of reason. Some have taken much pains to set faith and reason in opposition to each other ; and to make men believe they must lay aside their reason, when they contemplate the mysteries of the Christian religion. That they must blindly give up their assent to certain articles of faith, and take them in the same terms they are proposed, without any previous enquiry, or asking why, or wherefore ? and such even seem most inclinable to believe what they do not understand. To obviate this growing mistake and error, I shall endeavour to clear up this important enquiry, by the following observations.

There is no being in the world, whose essence is fully comprehended by human reason. We only see the outside of things, and form conclusions from external appearances ; but their nature and essence are chiefly concealed from us. We are ignorant of the cause and reason of the most obvious phenomena of nature. Nay, we know little of those beings we daily converse with, and are strangers to our own make and frame. When we reflect on our bodies, we ought to stand amazed at our composition, and confess, that *we are fearfully and wonderfully made.* And yet whatever knowledge we have obtained, was gained by the use and exercise of our reason. Reason is a spark of heavenly fire ; a divine light which God has placed in us, to dispel the mists

mists of ignorance and error ; and to enable us to distinguish truth from falshood. And tho' it has been much obscured by the fall of man, yet it is still sufficient to conduct us so far, as that by the assistance of God's grace, and the light of the holy spirit, we may be informed and instructed in all things necessary to obtain eternal happiness.

Reason, if taken for the faculty, is that reasonable soul, which God hath planted in us ; if for the act, it is the exercise of the faculties of the soul, in apprehending and forming a judgment of such objects as are presented to the mind. Hence all knowledge, whether human or divine, is obtained by the use and exercise of reason. The promise to the apostles, of the spirit, to lead them into all truth, was made good to them, by secretly informing their understandings, with the knowledge of such heavenly mysteries as God thought fit to reveal. But this promise when applied to us, is performed by inclining us to consult the holy scriptures, and diligently to use those means which God has appointed for our information. Reason is therefore the judge of all such truths as are adequate to reason. For as sense is the proper judge of such objects as concern the sensitive faculty ; as the eye is the only judge of colours, the ear of sounds ; so reason is the sole judge of all such truths as are level to and within the sphere of its faculties.

God gave us reason, to enable us to contemplate the wonders of creation and providence, to praise and adore the great author of them. Nay, reason is the proper judge, what truths are revealed, and what not. God has appealed to the reason of mankind, even as to the reasonableness of those truths which reason cannot comprehend, and are only discovered by divine revelation. To affirm any truths are revealed in scripture, unless we have

good reason to believe it, is not sufficient, because revelation is often produced to maintain contrary and even contradictory opinions; and therefore it is our reason only, that can find out and distinguish the true from the pretended revelation. And whatever seems to be revealed as a truth, which implies a plain contradiction to the natural notions of our minds, cannot possibly be true. For instance, it is highly reasonable to conceive that the divine-essence or attributes of God are infinitely mysterious and incomprehensible; and therefore we ought to believe whatever he has certainly revealed of himself, tho' it surpasses our weak understandings to apprehend the manner of it. But should any one affirm that it is revealed in scripture, that God is a cruel, arbitrary, and unjust being; I could safely answer such without lessening the authority of holy writ, that he mistakes the meaning of those places, by which he would prove this absurd opinion. For if I conceive God to be a being of all possible perfection, it is a plain contradiction, to impute injustice and cruelty to such a holy and pure being. Such texts of scripture therefore must be interpreted in some other sense, more agreeable to those natural notions which God has imprinted on the minds of men. Hence it appears, that all those truths to which we are indispensably obliged to yield our assent, are agreeable to right reason, and therefore the Christian religion must needs be our reasonable service; because the duties it requires us to perform, are also our reasonable service. This is evident if we consider our duty in relation to God, our neighbour, or ourselves; for the reasonableness of them will appear, from the nature of God, of our own beings, and the good effects which are consequent to the performance of our duties.

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The reasonableness of those duties which immediately relate to God, such as the loving, fearing and worshipping of them, will clearly appear from the consideration of God's nature. If we consider God as the first cause of all things, or as invested with all his adorable perfections and attributes, discovered to us by natural reason and revelation, it must be highly agreeable to the dictates of reason, that we should offer to him the service both of our souls and bodies : by loving and admiring his amiable perfections, adoring and reverencing his divine majesty, relying and depending on him, and expressing the sentiments of our hearts, by the language of our tongues. For if God is the first cause of all things, who by the word of his power created this wonderful frame of the world out of nothing ; who supplies us with all the good things we enjoy, opening his hand and dispensing his benefits to us ; then surely it is highly reasonable, that we should love, worship, and adore this our supreme and bountiful benefactor. His power and dominion over us, call loudly for our worship and acknowledgment ; his goodness and beneficence, for our love, esteem and gratitude ; nay, every perfection in the divine nature, if duly considered, must raise suitable affections in our hearts, and direct us in the worship of our maker. And as an eminent father of our church judiciously observed, 'that religious worship must needs be most acceptable to God, which is most comfortable to those natural notions, which we bear of him in our minds.' And from the consideration of those glorious attributes of God, his power, goodness and veracity ; we may easily collect how reasonable it is, that we should worship, love, fear, and trust in him, in which is contained all our duty to God.

This also appears, if we consider the condition of our beings. We are poor, frail, impotent crea-
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tures, and depend on God, for our life, and whatever we enjoy ; every moment we breathe is the gift of his bounty, and we are preserved by the same almighty power, that at first created us. How reasonable then is it, that we should own our dependance upon God, by a daily acknowledgment of his mercies ; that we should retain a grateful sense of his benefits, dread the loss of his favour, rely upon him to supply our necessities, and to deliver us from all those dangers and calamities to which we are continually exposed. Especially, since by the performance of these duties, we contribute to our own welfare, and encrease our own happiness. For to worship God is both our privilege and duty, and affords a most reasonable pleasure. There is a wonderful delight in serving God, and performing the exercises of devotion. It is the greatest pleasure and happiness on earth, for a man to have his mind filled with glorious conceptions of the divine majesty ; to have his affections placed on this solid and durable good ; and to be able to depend on him in all dangers, to repose himself under the shadow of his wings, to resign his will to God's, under the most deplorable circumstances, and to have such a grateful sense of all his mercies and loving-kindness to him, as will kindle in his heart the flames of love and charity. Every good and virtuous man takes greater pleasure and delight in the exercises of devotion, than in the most luxurious gratifications of sense. For the glory and service of God, was the main and principal end of our creation ; and we ought to be best pleased when we are regularly pursuing that end. And if the worship of God be thus our reasonable service, we should take delight and pleasure in performing it. Nor is it less necessary and reasonable,

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That those duties which one neighbour owes to another, should be punctually observed ; that love, peace, and unanimity should be kept up ; that we should love our neighbour as ourselves, and do to all men, as we should desire to be done by, were we in their circumstances. That every man's property should be secured, and not to suffer wrong in his person, goods or reputation. That we should be true, just and punctual in all our dealings. That we should be content with that station in the world, which God has assigned us, so as not to covet and desire what is another's. These duties are so agreeable to the natural dictates of our minds, that all must confess they are highly just and reasonable, and have been practised by the more sober heathens, even to the shame of professed Christians. The meek and humble Jesus also taught us both by precept and example, that we should *love our enemies, do good to those that hate us, and despitefully use us, and persecute us.* And however difficult this may seem to be, yet upon due examination it will appear to be our *reasonable service*, and no less our interest than our duty. For to pass by injuries, to love our enemies, to return good for evil, is the best way to maintain the peace of our own minds, as also our peace with God and man ; and is the most probable method to defeat the malice of our enemies, by melting them into love and friendship. And it is a duty enjoined by that God who has forgiven us infinitely more sins than we can forgive our neighbour ; and who sent his only begotten son to die for us, when we were enemies to him. So that it appears highly just and reasonable, much for our interest, as also agreeable to our duty ; to pass by injuries, to love our enemies, and to return their ill language and behaviour with our real love and esteem. I now proceed to shew the reasonableness of our duty, in the government of ourselves.

And surely it requires not many arguments to prove, that to be temperate and sober, to govern our passions and restrain our appetites within due bounds, is our reasonable service; since the rule and measure by which we ought to govern all our appetites and passions, is that of *right reason*. If we exceed the bounds of moderation and sin against our reason, then it is that we offend God. For he does not deny us the use of any the good things of this world, having furnished it like a plentiful storehouse for our sustenance and delight; and only prohibited such things, as tho' they may be agreeable to sense, yet they are condemned by reason, as extravagant and brutish. Humanity, meekness, contentedness, diligence, chastity, temperance, are the dictates of right reason; and if duly practised, will promote our happiness both here and hereafter, and carry with them their own reward. Where reason bears sway, virtue must needs prevail: Indeed, as to self-denial and mortification, so strictly enjoined by the Christian religion, this some think *a hard saying*; for a man to deny himself the lawful enjoyments and pleasures of this life. But if we consider, how dangerous it is to indulge our appetites to their utmost extent; that the limits between virtue and vice, are exceedingly narrow; it will then appear to be highly reasonable for us to put some restraint upon ourselves, and also to pray unto God, not to lead us into temptation. To prove that the mortification of our sinful inclinations and vicious habits, is absolutely necessary and truly *reasonable*, we need only to consider our obligations to the contrary virtues. For if reason obliges us to be humble, it equally engages us to avoid pride. If it is our interest to be sober, intemperance must needs be to our detriment. If justice obliges us to be chaste, violence and injustice must certainly be condemned. Hence it evidently appears how reason-

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able it is, that God should exact the obedience of our wills, to all the duties he has enjoined in the gospel.

And God not only requires the homage of our understanding, and the obedience of our wills, but also the zeal and fervour of our affections; in which respect also religion is *our reasonable service*. We must *love the Lord our God, with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength*. All the faculties of our souls, all the powers of our bodies, must be employed in the service of our maker. We must have our *conversation in heaven*, place our chiefest delight in those things that will bring us there. An external compliance with the precepts of the gospel, a joining communion with the church, and performing the duties of religion, is not the only things required of a Christian. For there must be a vital principle within us, what the psalmist calls a *delight in the law of God*; a love to, and pleasure in the performance of his commands. We must give God our hearts and affections, make his service our chiefest pleasure and delight. And this is *our reasonable service*: for if God is our king, it is *reasonable* we should pay him the homage of our hearty affection to his government; if God is our father, we ought to obey him with a cordial love and filial fear; if we have received all we enjoy from God, it is certainly most just and reasonable, that we should offer to him the most grateful resentments of our souls, filled with love and gratitude. Thus I have endeavoured to shew how reasonable it is, that God should require the assent of our understanding to the truth contained in his holy word; the obedience of our wills to the duties enjoined us; and the zeal and fervour of our affections. I shall now make a few inferences from what has been said.

Hence

Hence then it appears evident, that those truths ought to be most readily embraced, which are clearest and plainest to our reason ; and that, *that religion is the best*, not which fills our minds with curious speculations, or cloggs our belief with the most unaccountable mysteries ; but *that which informs the judgment with the most weighty truths*, such as have a direct influence upon practice, and most clearly discovers the will and mind of God to us, and lays down the most encouraging motives to engage the performance of it. And therefore as those persons are much mistaken, who think our reason sufficient to bring us to the knowledge of all truth, human or divine ; so do they err, who exclude reason from matters of faith ; and are so fond of mysteries, that they will either find or *make* them, in the plainest articles of our faith. We may hence also infer, in what points we ought to distrust our reason ; and these are such as reason tells us is above her reach : As the doctrine of the trinity, and the incarnation of our Saviour. Reason itself will inform us, that our ideas of spiritual beings are confused and imperfect ; that the essence of the Almighty, infinitely transcends our conceptions of him ; and that our natures must be altered and our bodies spiritualized, before we can receive those rays of light and knowledge, that will shine upon the soul in a state of glory and happiness. And it is worthy observation, that those truths which are most mysterious, are least necessary to be understood ; but those which are absolutely necessary to salvation, lie level to every ones understanding, or are plainly revealed in scripture, and ought readily to be entertained and assented to by every good Christian. — I also infer from hence, that all damnable heresies, proceed rather from the pravity of mens wills, than the error of their judgments. Natural reason goes a great way to inform men in the know-

knowledge of what they ought to do and believe; and where that fails, God has offered the light of revelation to conduct them. So that the sins of men must be more imputed to their perverse wills than to their mistaken judgments.

What great reason then have we Christians to bless God for giving us so excellent a religion, which is built on the solid foundation of sound reason. And since the Christian religion has been depraved and debased by the corrupt glosses, and perverse interpretations of scripture, the traditions and inventions of superstitious men; we have still the more reason to bless God, for giving and continuing to us a religion purified and refined by a blessed reformation. We are not led on blindly to believe, as the church does, but have liberty to search the scriptures, to read, weigh and consider the truths contained therein; and from thence to learn what God requires of us. We have a religion that will bear the test of the severest trial; and the more it is examined, the better we shall like and approve of it. And the chief reason why we of the reformed religion are not of one mind, so as to hold one communion, is, that our religion is more in the tongue than in the head and heart. I mean, we love rather to talk in a religious strain, than either to understand or practise it. And from hence it is, that too many cannot distinguish the fundamental from the less necessary truths; the weightier matters, from those of lesser moment, in which mutual forbearance ought to be given on both sides.

Again.

If religion is our reasonable service, then have we the best and most excellent motive to be religious. For what can more effectually recommend a holy and religious life, than the consideration, that such a state is exactly agreeable to our reason, which is the most noble faculty of the soul? It is suitable to the dignity

nity of our being, and such as becomes a reasonable creature to practise. Every precept of our religion tends to perfect our nature, to make us more like that excellent being, from whom all goodness and perfection is derived. And we may hence infer, that the more wicked men grow, the more irrational they are. For as the practice of virtue and holiness dignifies mens nature, and raises it to a nearer conformity to God, so by indulging ourselves in wickedness and vice, we debase our minds to the lowest state. For every sin we commit is a departure from the rules of right reason; it is doing a base, unworthy, and unmanly act; which a wise man would be ashamed of, and we shall sorely lament, whenever we seriously consider about it. By contracting habits of vice, we render our understandings less capable to inform us when we do amiss. And hence men become so deeply immersed in sensuality, that they commit sin with greediness; and will not discern the deformity and unreasonableness of vice, thinking it commendable and praise-worthy, to be wicked, and to glory in their shame. But this is certainly a most sad and miserable condition. And that we may be careful to avoid it; let every one of us thus reason with himself; *What doth the Lord require of me, but to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God?* What doth God expect from us, but that we should follow the dictates of our reason, and make use of that reasonable faculty he has given us, to distinguish between good and evil; and by this *candle of the Lord*, to direct our ways? And then we shall hereafter be exalted to the highest degrees of glory. But if we live by sense, and not by reason; if we submit to that *law in our members, which warreth against the law of our minds*; if we pursue after earthly things, place our happiness in gratifying the sensual and brutish part of us, our bodily appetites
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and fleshly lusts ; then have we nothing to expect in the next life, but looking for the just vengeance, and dreadful indignation of God, for the abuse of those talents he has committed to our trust. Lastly,

Hence we may learn to reflect on God's wonderful goodness, in suiting our duty to the nature of our beings ; and having made us reasonable creatures, to expect from us only a reasonable service. And tho' our notions of good and evil are much obscured and defaced, by the sin of our first parents, yet herein is manifest the wonderful goodness of God, in that he has procured a remedy for this desperate disease ; and afforded to every one the blessed influences of his grace and holy spirit, which will be sufficient to lead us into all knowledge necessary to salvation, and enable us to perform whatever he expects from us. What then shall we render unto the Lord for his mercies and loving kindness, to the children of men ; let us offer up to him the living sacrifice of a pure heart, and a conscience undefiled, which will be more acceptable to him, than the *cattle on a thousand hills*. Let us observe his precepts which are thus righteous, just and good ; and walk in the way of his commandments, all the days of our lives.

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DISCOURSE CXIV. Abp. Tillotson.

The wickedness of scoffing at religion.

2 Pet. 3. 3.

— *There shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts.*

IN our Saviour's time, there was a common persuasion among Christians, that the day of the Lord was at hand; and because Christ did not come when some looked for him, they derided the Christians, as enduring persecution in a vain expectation of what was never likely to happen. They saw every thing continue, "as they were from the beginning of the world," notwithstanding the apprehension of Christians concerning the approaching end of it. They perceived no change or alteration, except that one generation died, and another succeeded in the room of it; but as to the world, it still remained as it was; and might, for what they knew, continue so forever. So that the principles of these men, seem to be much the same with those of the *Epicureans*, who denied the providence of God and the immortality of the soul; and consequently a future judgment, which will sentence men to rewards and punishments in another world. These great and fundamental principles of all religion, they derided as the fancies and dreams of melancholy men, who were weary of the world, and pleased themselves with imaginary happiness, and perfect ease in another life. But as they believed none of these things, therefore they gave all manner of license and indulgence to their lusts.

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The character here given of these scoffers is, that they *walk after their own lusts*. And no wonder if they denied a future judgment, when they gave themselves up to all manner of sensuality. St. Jude v. 18. 19; also tells us, that “there shall come in the last days mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts, sensual, not having the spirit.” So that those who profanely scoff at religion, are sensual men of licentious lives; it flows from their very temper and disposition to deride God and religion; which is the highest kind of impiety. But men do not usually arrive to this degree of wickedness at first, but come to it gradually. The Psalmist elegantly describes this to us, “blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful *.” Men generally are corrupted by bad counsel and company, which is called “walking in the counsel of the ungodly;” then they habituate themselves to their vicious practices, which is “standing in the way of sinners;” and at last they proceed to a resolved contempt of all religion, which is called, “setting in the seat of the scornful.” For when men once indulge themselves in wicked courses, their vicious inclinations sway their understandings, and make them disbelieve those truths which contradict their lusts. Every inordinate lust and passion is a false bias upon mens understandings, which naturally incline them to atheism; and then men will not believe as the evidence of things is, but according to their humour and interest. When men live as if there was no God, to them it becomes necessary there should be none; and then they are glad to find arguments to fortify themselves in this persuasion. Dissolute persons disregard religion, because they would not be subject to the strict rules and laws of it. They hate
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* Psal. 1. 1.

and despise it, because it reproves their vices. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil * ; for every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." The principles of religion and the doctrines of Christ, are terrible enemies to wicked men, for they are continually galling their consciences; and this makes them declaim against religion and the scriptures. For there is no ease and comfort to be had, from atheistical principles. So that the true reason why any man is an atheist, is, because he is a wicked man. Religion would restrain his lusts, and therefore he despises and ridicules it.

But the heinousness and aggravation of this sin of scoffing, will more plainly appear, by the following suppositions; not that there is any truth in them, but only to shew the unreasonableness of this humour. Suppose then, that these men are in the right in denying the principles of religion, and that what they pretend is true; yet since the generality of men believe otherwise, it is great rudeness and incivility at least, to scoff at these things; and was there no such thing as sin, still it would be a great offence against the laws of civil conversation. Every man indeed has a right to dispute against a false religion, and to represent all its absurd and ridiculous consequences, as the ancient fathers did with the heathen; but it is a barbarous incivility for any man to make sport and a jest of what others call religion, and this not intending to convince their reason, but only to provoke their rage. For the atheist can pretend no obligation of conscience, why he should even dispute the principles of religion, much less deride them. He who professes any religion may pretend conscience for opposing a contrary religion; but he that denies all religion, can pretend

* John 3. 19. 20.

pretend no conscience for any thing. If the notion of a deity be founded in a natural fear, it is in vain to expel it; for whatever violence may be offered to nature by endeavouring to reason men into a contrary persuasion, nature will at last return to itself, and then the fear will be encreased, from the apparent dangerous consequences of such an impiety.

But if we suppose the apprehension of a deity to have no foundation in nature, but to arise from tradition, confirmed by the prejudice of education, the difficulty of removing it will still be very great; because what men take in by education is next to what is natural. And could it be extinguished, no advantage would accrue. For, except the avoiding of persecution for religion, there is no benefit that can arise from the principles of atheism. All the advantage that men make of them, is to take the liberty to do what they please; to be more sensual and unjust than others; to surfeit themselves and to be often sick; to make mankind their enemy by their unjust and dishonest actions; and to live more uneasily than other persons. So that the principles of religion, the belief of a God and another life, by obliging men to be virtuous, do really promote their temporal happiness. And all the privilege that atheism pretends to, is to give a loose to vice, which is naturally attended with many temporal inconveniencies. The atheist then has not the least pretence of reason to dispute against religion, much less to scoff at and ridicule it.

And where no obligation of conscience nor of reason can be pretended, then certainly the laws of civility ought to take place. And as those who profess to believe there is a God, and that the principles of religion are true, have a great veneration for these things; there cannot be a greater infolence, than for a man to fall foul of those things, in
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company that he knows to have a great reverence for them. But this is still worse, when we consider that the generality of mankind are of the same opinion; and this makes it the greatest rudeness and incivility that can be imagined. I have been the larger on this head, in regard to such as are better educated, who are guilty of this vice; because they pretend to understand the laws of behaviour and decencies of conversation, better than other men. Again.

But supposing it was doubtful whether there be a God or not? or whether the principles of religion be true or not? and that the arguments were equal on both sides; yet it is both a sin and a folly to deride such things. And here I suppose as much as the atheist can with any reason pretend to. For no man can pretend to demonstrate there is no God, nor a future state after this. These being negatives are capable of no proof, unless a man could shew them to be impossible. But supposing the probabilities equal on both sides, yet even then it is monstrous folly to deride these things; because tho' the arguments on both sides are equal, yet the danger and hazard is infinitely unequal. For if it prove true there is no God, the principles of religion and virtue do in their own nature tend to make the religious man more happy in this world, than the atheist. Because they give satisfaction to his mind, and his conscience is thereby freed from many fearful apprehensions, which the atheist feels. Besides, the practice of religion and virtue naturally promotes our temporal felicity. It is more for a man's health and reputation, and more for his advantage in other worldly respects, to lead a virtuous, than a vicious course of life. And as for the other world, if there be no God, the case of the religious man and the atheist will be the same; because they will both be extinguished by death, and insensible of any farther happiness.

pinels and misery. But should it prove true, that there is a God, and that the souls of men are to receive the just reward of their actions; then the case of the religious man and the atheist must be vastly different. And where shall the wicked and ungodly then appear? What will then be the portion of those who have affronted God, derided his word, and made a mock of every thing sacred and religious? What must such expect, but to be rejected by him, whom they have renounced, and to feel the dreadful effects of that power and justice, which they have despised? So that tho' the arguments on both sides were equal, yet the danger is not. On the one side there is none, on the other, there is infinite hazard. It must therefore be a monstrous folly, for any to make a mock of those things which he knows not whether they be true or not; and and if they be, they are far from being of any jesting matter. Lastly,

Suppose there be a God, and the principles of religion are true, then it is not only a heinous impiety, but perfect madness, to scoff at these things. And that there is a God, and that the principles of religion are true, I have already endeavoured to prove. Therefore it is not only the highest pitch of impiety, but the greatest folly to deride these things. To be disobedient to the commands of God is a great contempt, but to deny his being, to make sport with his word, to ridicule it by turning the wise and weighty sayings of that book into raillery, is a most direct affront to almighty God. Besides, this profane spirit is an argument of a most incorrigible temper. The wise man speaks of the scorner, as one of the worst sort of sinners, and hardest to be reclaimed; because he despises instruction, and mocks at the means whereby he should be reformed. It is also a most horrid ingratitude thus to use the

author of our beings and the patron of our lives; to scoff at and openly defy him, in whom we live, move, and have our being. It is likewise a most heinous and dangerous impiety, to despise him that can destroy us; and oppose him who is infinitely more powerful than we. "Will ye, says the apostle, provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?" But the sin and folly of this profane temper still farther appears, in that there is not the least temptation to it. When the devil tempts men, with riches or honour to ruin themselves, he seems to offer some sort of consideration; but the profane scoffer serves the devil for nought, and sins only for the sake of sinning; he suffers himself to be tempted to the sins of the greatest danger; for no other reward, but the slender reputation of being a wit, and saying what no wise man would dare to say. And what a folly is this, for a man to offend his conscience to please his humour, and only for the sake of a jest, to lose two of the best friends he hath, God, and his own soul? I will now proceed to offer some considerations, to deter men from this impious and dangerous folly of profaneness, which some call wit. And then endeavour to persuade men, to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them, to the service and glory of God.

It is really wonderful how it comes to pass, that some men should be esteemed wits, only for jesting and scoffing at those things, which the greatest part of mankind reverence. A wise man would not speak contemptuously of a great prince, tho' he was out of his dominions; because he remembers that the power and influence of kings, many times reach a great way farther than their direct authority. But, "God is a great king, and in his hands are all the corners of the earth; we can go no where from his spirit, nor can we fly from his

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presence." Wherever we are, his eyes see us, and his right hand can reach us. Did men truly consult their own interest, safety, or reputation, they would never exercise their wit in such dangerous matters. Wit is a sharp weapon, as apt for mischief as for good, if not well managed. The proper use of it, is to season conversation, to represent things that are praise-worthy, to the best advantage; to expose the vices and follies of men, and such things as are truly ridiculous; but if applied to the abuse of matters the most grave and serious, it then loses its commendation. All wit which borders upon profaneness and makes bold with what demands the greatest reverence, ought to be branded with folly. If we would then preserve ourselves from this vice, we must take heed how we scoff at religion, under any form, lest we insensibly bring it into contempt. We must not accustom ourselves to a slight and irreverent use of the name of God; for we may easily slide into the highest degree of profaneness, if we do not carefully preserve a due reverence for his great and glorious name, and an awful regard to the holy scriptures; but none are so ready to scoff at religion, as those who are accustomed to common swearing.

Let no one then think the worse of religion, because some dare to despise and deride it. The most grave and serious things in the world, are liable to be abused. *Epidetus* observes, "that every thing hath two handles." By which he means, that there is nothing so bad, but may admit of some excuse and extenuation; nor nothing so excellent, but a man may find out something, whereby to traduce it. A sharp wit may discover something in the wisest man, whereby to expose him to the contempt of judicious people. The gravest book may be made ridiculous, by applying some sayings in it to a foolish purpose. For a jest may be obtruded upon

any thing. And therefore no man ought to have the less reverence for the principles of religion, or the holy scriptures, because idle and profane wits can break jests upon them. Nothing is so easy as to take particular phrases and expressions out of the best book in the world, and to abuse them by putting a forced ridiculous sense upon them. But no wise man will think the worse of a good book for this reason, but rather of the man that abuses it. For surely the best way is to condemn those who would bring into contempt, any thing that is valuable and worthy of praise.

Let me then persuade men to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purposes; in the service, and to the glory of that God, who hath bestowed these gifts on men. It is the perfection of every thing to attain its true and proper end; and the end of all the gifts that God hath given us, is to glorify the giver. Here is subject enough to exercise the wit of men and angels; to praise that infinite goodness, almighty power, and exquisite wisdom which made all things, and to admire what we can never sufficiently praise; to vindicate the wise and just providence of God, in the government of the world; and endeavour to discover the beauty and harmony, and reconcile all the seeming discords and irregularities of the divine administration; to explain the oracles of the holy scriptures, and adore that great mystery of divine love, which the angels desire to pry into; God's sending his only son into the world to save sinners, and to give his life a ransom for them. These would be noble exercises for the tongues and pens of the greatest wits. And subjects of this nature are the best tryals of our abilities. Satire and invective are the easiest kind of wit; almost any degree of it is sufficient to abuse and find fault. Wit is a keen instrument, and every one can cut and gash with it; but

but to carve and polish a beautiful image, requires great art and skill. To praise any thing well is an argument of much more wit, than to abuse. A little wit and a great deal of ill-nature will furnish a man for satire; but the greatest instance of wit, is to commend well. I observe this on purpose to recommend to men a nobler exercise for their wits, and if possible, to make them ashamed of that scoffing humour, which is so easy, so ill-natured, and not only an enemy to religion, but to every thing that is wise and worthy.

It is a melancholy reflection, that in a nation professing Christianity, so horrid an impiety as this should dare to appear; and it is time for God to shew himself, when his being is called in question, and to come and judge the world, when men begin to doubt whether he made it. The scripture mentions two things as the forerunners, and reasons of his coming to judgment; infidelity and profane scoffing at religion. "When the son of man comes shall he find faith on the earth?" And one reason of the Lord's coming is, "to convince ungodly sinners of all their hard speeches, which they had spoken against him ||." And if these things be a sign and reason of his coming, I wish that we of this age, may not have too much cause to apprehend *the judge to be at the door.* But I will now offer a few considerations, to shew, how great the folly is, *for men to make a mock at sin.*

* "As to that highest degree of profane mockers, who have no other hope to rest upon, but that of atheism and infidelity; their folly is greater than can be expressed in words, or conceived by imagination. For what is the state of such a person, when God requires his soul? Can he be sure there is no God? Or can he demonstrate that there will be no future state? The most hardened unbeliever,

F 3

never

|| Jude. 15. * Clarke.

never yet pretended to prove this. And if he had, all his comfort and hopes would be only that of a beast, the expectation of perishing, as if he had never been. But since there can be no such demonstration on the side of atheism ; the consequent possibility on the other side, that there may be a God, proves the folly of the profane mocker to be intolerable. The probability that there is a God still encreases that folly ; the certainty, the demonstration that there cannot but be a God, shews it to be, “ the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness ||.” For if there be a God, as the works of nature demonstrate there is ; both reason declares and revelation fully confirms, that he will govern the world in righteousness, and in the end judge every man according to his works. That poor objection of the scoffers mentioned by *St. Peter*, that all things hitherto continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, and that therefore they never will be otherwise, discovers the extreme shortness of those mens understandings, who consider not, that God with much long suffering gives men space of repentance, and can as easily judge the world after a thousand years as after one day’s time. Upon which delay of our Lord’s coming, if any wicked servant flatters himself, that he will not come at all, and upon that assurance of impunity, hardens himself in his impiety ; “ The Lord of that servant will come in a day, when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For, as the days before the flood, men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that *Noah* entred into the ark ; and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away ; even thus shall it be in the day,

day, when the son of man is revealed †." Then shall the Lord convince ungodly men of all their hard and profane speeches, which they have spoken against him. And the wicked seeing the salvation of the righteous, shall, with anguish of spirit, say within themselves, "we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour; but now is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints *."

As for those who cannot reason themselves into infidelity, but believe the certainty of a future state, and of a judgment to come; and yet live viciously, and continue impenitent, upon a general, loose and inconsiderate expectation that sin is less dangerous, and God more merciful than the gospel represents him; the folly of making a mock of sin in this sense, and upon this ground, is to shut ones eyes upon the mouth of destruction: the folly of this is well reprov'd in these words, "My son, flee from sin, as from the face of a serpent; for—the teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men; and all iniquity is as a two edged sword, the wounds whereof cannot be healed ‖." To imagine that God will be pleas'd with an empty form of godliness, and accept a zeal for meer names and distinctions of religion, without true virtue and true holiness of life, is to be so foolish, as to think God more easily deceived than mortal men; and that the searcher of hearts will be impos'd upon, with an outward profession of service, which even an earthly superior would with indignation reject. "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous." The vain hope of those who rely on any other foundation, is thus elegantly described. "The hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth, that is driven away with the storm; like as the smoke

F 4

which

† Luke 17. 30. * Wisd. 5. 4. ‖ Ecclus. 21. 2.

which is dispersed here and there with the tempest ; and passeth away as the remembrance of a guest, that tarrieth but a day : But the righteous live for evermore ; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the most high *." Lastly,

As to those who are truly sensible of the indispensable necessity of a virtuous life, and yet at the present speak peace to themselves, in the practice of unrighteousness, and the enjoyment of unlawful pleasures, with a view to repent and amend hereafter ; the folly of making a mock at sin in this sense, is the madness of playing with death, and sporting with destruction. It is the folly of letting slip opportunities which probably may never be retrieved. It is the folly of provoking God to cut us off in his wrath, and to assign us our portion among hypocrites and unbelievers. It is the folly of rendering a man's self more and more incapable of doing *that*, which is of absolute necessity, not to be left undone. For except we do effectually repent and amend, and that speedily, so as to bring forth the fruits of the spirit, we shall inevitably perish. And yet the longer any man continues in sin, the more difficult it will be to leave it off. For he grows hardened at length, thro' the deceitfulness of sin, and by being long accustomed to do evil, it becomes in a manner as difficult for him to learn to do well, as for the "*Ethiopian* to change his skin, or the leopard his spots." But I would fain hope that men will pity themselves, and repent, and give glory to God, and know in this their day, the things that belong to their peace. Which God grant, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

* Wisd. 5. 14.

DISCOURSE CXV. Abp. Sharp.

Of apostacy, and the sin unto death.

Heb. 10. 26. 27.

For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

THESE words have terrified many persons, because they seem so severe against all those who have been wilful sinners after baptism, and which indeed is the case of most Christians; as to give little hopes of obtaining the forgiveness and favour of God, even after their best repentance. It may therefore be of great service, to endeavour to give some satisfaction to such scrupulous minds, as are in any perplexity and trouble on this account. In order to this, I shall enquire, what it is to sin wilfully; what sort of wilful sin the apostle here means; and in what sense there remains no more satisfaction for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment.

Sins are generally distinguished into three sorts; sins of ignorance, of infirmity, and of wilfulness; answerable to the three distinct prime faculties or powers of the soul of man, from which all actions flow; namely, the understanding, the will, and the sensual appetites or affections. When we do any sinful action, that faculty of these three denominates the sin, from whose fault or irregularity,

the action doth chiefly proceed ; for it is certain, that in every sin a man commits, all the three faculties, do in some degree concur. If the understanding, by not rightly apprehending its duty, be most in fault, then the sin so committed is a sin of ignorance ; tho' it may also have somewhat of infirmity and wilfulness in it. Thus as to *St. Paul* in persecuting the church, it was the want of understanding, the error of his judgment, that chiefly missed him, and not any malice in his will or corruption in his affections ; and therefore he calls this action of his, a sin of ignorance. But if the main fault be in the affections, thro' some sudden passion, either blinding or corrupting the judgment, by fear, anger, or desire ; the sin arising from hence, tho' joined with some degree of ignorance and wilfulness, is yet properly a sin of infirmity. Such was *Peter's* denying of Christ. His understanding was not in fault, for he very well knew what he did. Nor was the fault so much in his will, as to make it properly a wilful sin ; for he did not deny our Saviour out of malice, nay, he resolved not to do it. And even honoured him with his heart, when he denied him with his tongue. But the fault was in his affections. It was fear that surprized his soul, when he saw his master so despitefully used before his face ; which made him afraid to own him, not knowing how to avoid the present danger he was in. So that *St. Peter's* denial, was properly a sin of infirmity. But where the understanding is competently informed with knowledge, and not much transported with any violent sudden passion, so that the blame must be imputed to the will, which is resolutely bent upon the evil action ; the sin hence arising, tho' perhaps not free from some mixture of ignorance and infirmity, is yet properly a wilful, presumptuous sin. And such was the sin of *David* in contriving the death of *Uriah*. For he could not pre-

pretend ignorance, or passion, having time enough to consider what he was about. He did the fact with deliberation, and full consent of his own will ; which made it a wilful, presumptuous sin.

An accurate casuist † thus defines a wilful sin. “ When a man, sufficiently convinced in his understanding, that the thing he would do, is unlawful and displeasing to God ; or, at least hath sufficient means to convince him, if he be not wilfully wanting to himself, in the use thereof : and hath besides time to advise with himself, to examine the case and every circumstance of it, and to apply the light of his understanding thereunto ; and yet when all is done, (contrary to the dictates of his own reason, and the checks of his conscience) goes on to put his wicked intentions into act, and to fulfil his own will, notwithstanding the apparent inconformity thereof, to the will of God ; this is a wilful sin.”—I now proceed to enquire, whether these words, that “ if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more satisfaction for sin,” is to be understood of all wilful sins committed after baptism, and our professing of Christianity ; or, that the apostle here only speaks of one kind of wilful sins.

To this I answer, that the apostles meaning does not extend to all wilful sins, committed after baptism, but is restrained to one sort of them ; because otherwise, this assertion could not be reconciled with abundance of plain texts, in both the old and new testament. Indeed, so long as any one lives in a course of known wilful sin, he cannot hope for the favour of God, or presume to be in a state of salvation. But then the scripture assures us, that there still remains a sacrifice for such sinful acts and habits ; God calls upon them to repent, and offers them his grace, if they will embrace it. How frequently.

quently does God by his prophets call, exhort, and invite even wilful and obstinate sinners to repentance; promising them pardon and acceptance, if they will leave their evil ways, and turn to him? And even such sinners as were under his covenant, who had sinned after they had received the knowledge of the truth. For God declares universally to all sinners, that "whenever a wicked man will turn from his wickedness that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive *." We have many instances and examples of those that have found mercy from God, after their falling into great and sinful crimes. As *David* after his commission of murder and adultery? *Solomon* after a course of debauchery and idolatry; *Manasses* after a long life of horrid impieties. Nor are the gates of repentance and mercy more shut up to offending sinners in the new testament, under the gospel, than in the old, under the law. For, if we are to forgive our brother seventy times seven, should he so often sin against us; we may certainly expect the same mercy from God, if we sin against him. Because he hath declared, that our dealings towards our brother, shall be the measure of his towards us. But our Saviour's kindness to the souls of those who even fell from their duty, after they knew it, and the means he useth to bring them to repentance, and his readiness to pardon them, if they do repent, sufficiently appear from the parable of the prodigal son: who, after he had consumed the portion given him, upon harlots and riotous living, was by his father, upon his return, received to favour, with all possible expressions of joy; even to the discontent of his other son, who had not displeased him. The same is also signified by the parable of the man and the lost sheep; who leaves the ninety and nine, to seek for that which was lost, and

and when he had found it, calls his neighbours to rejoice with him. *And more joy will be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just persons, that want no repentance.*

Should any object, that these encouragements are given to sinners, only upon their first embracing of Christ's religion; and are not to be extended to those who wilfully sin after baptism. To this I answer, that such an interpretation must do violence to the parable. For it should be observed, that the prodigal spoken of is not a stranger, but a son; and the sheep that goes astray, was not without an owner; so that we must expound this prodigal and lost sheep in the parable, of those persons, who after they become the sons of God by regeneration of water and the spirit, and are admitted into the fold of our great shepherd Jesus Christ, do abuse God's grace, and abandon themselves to evil courses, contrary to their profession. But that this text doth not speak of all wilful sins committed after baptism, or the profession of Christianity is plain, because the sinning wilfully here spoken of, can be meant only of such sins, as whoever commits them, doth tread underfoot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doth despite to the spirit of grace. For so St. Paul describes the wilful sin here spoken of. But I think and hope it would be untrue to affirm, that any act of wilful sin, or habit of vice, that Christians are ordinarily guilty of, can be charged with so high a crime, as these expressions seem to imply. We may therefore justly conclude, that it is not all wilful sins that St. Paul means, when he saith, *there remains no more sacrifice for such*; but only one particular kind of wilful sins, which shall be my next enquiry.

The wilful sin then that the apostle here speaks of, is no other than an apostacy from the faith of Christ, a renouncing of Christianity; not thro' some sudden
surprize

surprize or fear, and then returning to it again ; but a continued, obstinate desertion of it. A revolting to judaism, or heathenism, and becoming the adversaries of Christ and his religion. And the occasion of these words naturally leads us to this sense. The apostle bids us “ hold the profession of our faith without wavering, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another.” And the reason he gives for this, is, “ For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment.” Hence it is evident, that the apostles design is to persuade the jewish Christians to persevere in their religion, notwithstanding all the persecutions that threatned them on that account ; and to caution them against forsaking the Christian assemblies, and becoming Jews or Heathens, as some had done. And the argument used to enforce this exhortation, is, *that there remaineth no more sacrifice for their sins*, if they were guilty of renouncing the faith, *but only a fearful expectation of judgment*. For the frequenting the Christian assemblies was the only evidence they could give, of their being Christians. And the following words of the same apostle, adds a farther probability to this exposition. “ Whosoever despised *Moses* his law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the spirit of grace † ? ” The despisers of *Moses* his law, alluded to by the apostle, were those that renounced the covenant of *Moses*, into which they had entered ; and went over to the idolaters, to worship the sun, moon and
stars,

† Heb. 10. 28. 29.

stars*. Wherefore the wilful sinners here compared with them, must be such as were apostates from Christianity, as the others were from Judaism; or otherwise the apostle's discourse will not be consistent. If we thus understand these words, then the difficulty of them is cleared up.

The last thing to be enquired into, is, what the apostle means, when he says, "That to those who sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, to consume the adversary." These words do not imply, that the sin here spoken of is unpardonable, and not to be forgiven; but only, that to such as sin wilfully, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. That is, they must not expect another Christ to die for them; and yet notwithstanding, they may upon repentance have the benefit of that sacrifice, which was once offered for all the sins of the whole world. There is no one sin, nor the habit of any sin, of ever so damning a nature, but that upon repentance and change of life, the sinner may hope for pardon and acceptance. For if a man is in a capacity of repenting, his sin is capable of being forgiven. But the principal import of these words, is the miserable condition into which all that sin wilfully by renouncing their Christianity, do bring themselves. For hereby they forfeit all their right and title to the benefit of the gospel covenant, to the pardon of their sins, and the promise of eternal life; because there is but one sacrifice, that of Christ upon the cross, by which pardon of sin is to be obtained, and eternal life to be hoped for. But this sacrifice they have utterly disclaimed and rejected; looking upon the death of Christ as a punishment justly due to him, as being an impostor. So that if we once renounce
our

* Deut. 17. 3. 4. 5.

our great sacrifice, there remains no more for sin. If we reject that, there is nothing left, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, to consume such offenders.

But besides the dreadful condition of those who are guilty of renouncing their Christianity, there is farther implied in the text, the great difficulty and moral impossibility of recovering such persons out of such a sad state. For the nature of this sin is such, as to render men incapable of using the means, whereby to obtain a pardon. Whatever other sin a man commits, so long as he preserves his faith, there may be some hopes of him, that he may again by God's grace, be restored to his favour by repentance. But when a man renounceth his Christianity, tho' it is not impossible for him to be recovered, yet it is hardly to be expected; because there is no means of salvation but by Christ, and this he disclaims and renounces. So that morally speaking, there is nothing left for such an apostate, but a dreadful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume him. This apostle elsewhere speaks to the same purpose. "It is impossible, saith he, for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame †." The falling away here, is the same thing as a wilful departure from Christianity; and it is impossible to renew such apostates to repentance. The apostle does not mean an absolute, but a moral impossibility; and in the same sense that our Saviour saith, "it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." That is, it is very hard for a rich man to do this.

Thus

† Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.

Thus it is impossible for them to do good, that have accustomed themselves to do evil. That is, it is extremely difficult, and not easily effected. For tho' God may rescue such an apostate out of the devil's hand, yet he has no where promised it; nay, he has threatned that he will not.

Thus have I given a plain account of this difficult text, in which there is nothing that needs to terrify any well disposed person; tho' they may have been guilty of many wilful sins since their baptism, and coming to the knowledge of the truth. Nay, the greatest sinner ought not to despair of God's mercy, if they will but repent. For there is nothing in this text to discourage the hopes of any man's repentance, be his sins ever so great, so long as he continues in the profession of Christianity. But then let all seriously consider, that tho' there may be hopes of a man's repentance, however wicked he is, so long as he adheres to the religion of Christ; yet there is little hopes for those, who having been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, afterwards depart from the faith, and turn atheists or deists, or who renounce their Christianity: because such do in the apostle's sense trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.

I proceed to consider another passage of scripture, which occasions many fears and scruples to some timorous and melancholy persons; I mean this that follows. "If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it †." The difficulty of these words lies in what is meant by the sin unto death. And that we are not to pray for it. A sin unto death then, may be called so in two respects. First, as to

to the present danger of death to the sinner, tho' it may not prove fatal. And thus every wilful presumptuous sin, every habit or custom of wilful sin, is a sin unto death. That is, such sins and habits put a man into a state of death, and destroy his title to everlasting happiness. But then they are not deadly to all; for tho' the effect and consequence of sin prove to some sinners eternal death, yet to others this consequence is prevented by a timely repentance. So that in this sense, the sin unto death here mentioned, means those great and capital sins, which whosoever *lives in them shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven*. Such are adultery, fornication, idolatry, murder, covetousness, extortion, drunkenness, hatred, malice and the like. On the other side, the sin not unto death, and to which the sin unto death is opposed, must be meant, those frailties, infirmities, and interruptions of piety, which tho' properly sins, yet are consistent with a state of grace and regeneration, and destroy not a man's hope of happiness in the other world, tho' he never obtains an entire victory over them. Again,

A sin may be called a sin unto death, where the consequence of it is certain death to the sinner. When the course of sin is not only mortal, but doth really damn the man that is guilty of it, this is truly, and in the most proper sense, a sin unto death. By this notion, no man can sin unto death, but he whose sins are never pardoned. And every one doth sin the sin unto death, be his crimes what they will, who dies without repentance. So that what is a sin unto death in one man may not be so in another. Because one man's murder, adultery, idolatry, or the like, may be damnable to him, tho' not to another, guilty of the same, because he repents of them, and God may pardon him. But this can only be known to God. Thus I have given the two general senses, in which a sin
may

may be called a sin unto death. But the great question remains, how we are to understand the sin unto death here mentioned, that we are discouraged praying for? To this I answer in the following particulars.

That to interpret the sin unto death, of all grievous presumptuous sins, or habits of sin, that unrepented of destroy salvation, which is the first notion I gave of it; doth not seem to agree with St. *John's* meaning. Nor can it be reconciled with the constant practice of the Christian church, which not only pray for several such sinners, but admit them to communion upon their repentance. And to take the sin unto death for every such sin or sins, which might have been pardoned to the sinner, had he made use of God's grace for repentance, yet hath not been pardoned, but the sinner dies in his sin; such an interpretation has this great inconvenience in it, that it renders the apostle's injunction, about praying for sinners, wholly impracticable. For, according to this notion, none can know, as I before observed, but God only, what are sins unto death, and what not. Since the event alone makes the difference. But the apostle supposes that a man may know what is a sin unto death, and what is not so. Otherwise he would not have given us different rules for our prayers, as to the one or the other. Therefore the interpretation of the sin unto death, which I think most probable, is this. To take the sin unto death, for some gross wilful deadly sin, that unrepented of destroys salvation; but not to extend it to all such sins, but only to one particular sort of them: just as the sinning wilfully in St. *Paul*, for which there remains no more sacrifice, is not every wilful sin committed after baptism, but only one sort, as I have before shewn. Which particular kind of sin unto death, most probably, if all things be considered, is the very

very same sin, with St. Paul's wilful sin; I mean, a renouncing of Christianity; and the communion of the church, and going over to the enemies of it. My reason for this assertion is this.

The apostle thro' this whole epistle endeavours to keep the Jewish Christians firm to the faith, and to the Christian assemblies, from which many had departed; denying that Jesus is the Christ. In order to this, he labours to prove, that whatever boasts these deserters might make, of obtaining eternal life by their way; yet eternal life was only to be had by believing in Christ, and holding communion with his church. This is the record, "that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. — These things have I written to you, that believe on the name of the Son of God; and that ye may know ye have eternal life, seeing ye believe on the name of the Son of God †." And therefore it is, that the name of *life* is so often given to our Saviour by this apostle. Thus speaking of Jesus, he says, *the life was manifested. This is the true God and eternal life. He that hath the son, hath the life; but he that hath not the son, hath not the life* ||. Hence it is reasonable to believe, that when the apostle speaks of being in death, and a sin unto death, he means those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, or that renounce the Christian societies, and go either to the antichrist, or the heathen idolaters, against whom he cautions them. *Little children keep yourselves from idols.* I proceed to enquire, what the apostle means, when having told us, there is a sin unto death, he adds; *I do not say that a man shall pray for it.*

It is certain, that these words do not prohibit our praying for those, who have sinned the sin unto death. The utmost they can be extended to is, *I do not bid you to pray for it*; but there is a great difference. *† 1 John 5. 11. 13. || 1 John 5. 11. 12. 13. 1. 2.*

difference between the not bidding us to do a thing, and forbidding the doing. However, that all may the better understand the true meaning of these words of St. *Jahn*, I will give a brief paraphrase of it, according to what I have before observed. And I take the sense of the whole passage to be to this effect.

“ If any see a Christian fall into sin, he is not to be despaired of, because he is under the means of grace, and the mercies of the covenant. On the contrary, good Christians, and the officers of the church, are to intercede with God, for such a sinner; and no doubt, but upon their prayers in the name of Christ, God will afford him such a measure of grace, as, with his own endeavours, will be sufficient to obtain his pardon. This benefit all who adhere to Christ's religion have above others; that tho' we sin, there is means provided for our recovery. As for those who deny the Lord that bought them, and fall away, either to the jewish antichrists, or the heathen idolaters, there is not the same hopes nor encouragement for success to the prayers of others for them. For since they have renounced the Son of God, in whom alone life is to be had, they must needs be concluded under death. Therefore you cannot be so confident, that God will hear your prayers for such apostates, because their case is more dangerous, and their cure more difficult.”

It appears then, that it is not only lawful, but a very charitable and pious thing, to pray for all sorts of sinners, even the greatest. St. *Paul* exhorts, that “ prayers, and supplications, and intercessions, be made for all men,” without distinction; and our blessed Saviour prayed for those that crucified him; some of which were doubtless those very pharisees whom he had before charged with committing the sin against the Holy Ghost.

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Certainly there is no sinner in so bad and deplorable a condition, but we may pray for him ; nay, charity obliges us to it. And if our prayers are not available for him, yet they will be beneficial to ourselves.

From what has been observed, we may raise matter of comfort and satisfaction to many weak Christians. There are too many that partly thro' melancholy and an ill habit of body, partly thro' the terrors of an awakened conscience, joined with misunderstanding these and some other places of scripture ; who are apt to conclude, that they have sinned the sin unto death ; and that consequently no prayers either of their own, or other good Christians will be available for them. Or, that they have committed the wilful sin, for which there *remains no more sacrifice*. Or, that they are fallen from grace, and so cannot be renewed by repentance. Or, lastly, that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. As for this last sin, I shall treat of it in the next discourse. But for the others, I hope it well appears, that those I am now speaking of, are no ways concerned in them. For I suppose the persons who have these apprehensions, do profess Christianity, and have not fallen from it ; tho' possibly they may have been guilty of many great sins. They have never renounced their Lord and master, or turned apostates from his religion ; tho' their lives and practices may not have been in all respects so suitable as their profession required. If this be the case, then I think it is very evident, that they cannot be guilty of the crimes mentioned in these texts. That is, they have neither sinned the wilful sin, nor fallen away after having been enlightened ; nor sinned the sin unto death : Since these crimes import no less nor more than apostacy from the Christian religion to atheism or heathenism,

ism, or some other religion contrary to the Christian. Lastly,

But let no man, because he hath not sinned the sin unto death, encourage himself in any evil course or habit of sin, tho' it seem never so slight and excusable to him. There are many ways of going to hell, besides the sins I have been treating of. Every wilful sin, or habit of sin, continued in, be there never so many apologies made for it, from temper, constitution, business and interest; all such sins, if persisted in, will as certainly destroy a man's salvation as the sin against the Holy Ghost. Let no man therefore indulge himself in any evil course that God's law hath declared against, in hopes that it will be easily passed by, because it is not those enormous crimes that have a mark of infamy put upon them; since any known sin, encouraged and persisted in, and never repented of, may prove as fatal to a man's soul, as a torrent of open impieties. Nor let no man allow himself in any evil course, in confidence that he hath not yet sinned, beyond a probability of pardon, or in prospect that he may hereafter repent. This is the utmost presumption on God's mercy, and the only way to provoke God to withdraw his grace, and to give us up to hardness of heart, and a final impenitency. And when it comes to that, our eternal state is concluded; and we have indeed sinned a sin unto death in one sense, and no prayers or intercessions will be available.

DISCOURSE CXVI. Abp. Sharp.

Of the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Mat. 12. 31.

Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

IT is my present design to explain the nature of that sin, which we commonly call the sin against the Holy Ghost; the difficulty of rightly understanding it having created much trouble of mind and perplexity of thought to some well meaning people. There are many sins against the Holy Ghost; *whosoever grieveth or quencheth the spirit, sinneth against the Holy Ghost.* *Ananias and Sapphira* lyed against the Holy Ghost. *Simon Magus* in offering to purchase the gift of the spirit with money, committed a sin against the Holy Ghost. But none of these seem to be the sin, which by way of eminence we call the sin against the Holy Ghost. The not observing this distinction has occasioned many mistakes with respect to this sin. For the better finding out what this sin is, we must take the scriptures and them only for our guide. The neglect of this, is another reason why men have given such different definitions of this sin. There is no text in the epistles of the new testament, that doth in-express words mention it. As for the evangelists, there are three, who each of them speak once of it, and upon the same occasion. Of these three

three, I have fixed upon the largest and fullest in the text, and shall endeavour to give a particular account of it.

And first, I will give an account of the great sin here spoken of, which we call the sin against the Holy Ghost. Now, tho' we call it the sin against the Holy Ghost, yet the text does not stile it by that name; but gives it such a name, as to instruct us to what a particular kind of sins we are to reduce it; that is, *blasphemy, or speaking reproachful words against another*. We may observe, that it is no where called the sin against the Holy Ghost, neither in the text, nor in either of the two gospels, but always the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or speaking against the Holy Ghost, which is the same thing. For to blaspheme, is to speak against another. To blaspheme, is used, not only with respect to God, but to other persons, and imports neither more nor less than slander, calumny, or evil speeches, against whomsoever they are spoken. And where we translate *speaking evil of dignities*, Jude 8, in the Greek it is *blaspheming of dignities*. And where our translators render, these men *speaking evil* of things, in the Greek it is, *blaspheme things*. Thus St. Paul commands, "that Christians should *speaking evil* of no man." In the Greek it is, "that they shall *blaspheme* no man." And there are many other instances of this kind. So that the sin against the Holy Ghost doth plainly consist in blasphemy, or calumny, or slanderous words. That which remains then is to discover what kind of blasphemy it is, that is here called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and this we shall easily find out by having recourse to the context.

The occasion of these words in the text was this. Our Saviour having cast a devil out of a man, that

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|| Mat. 12. 22, 23 & 4.

was blind and dumb, so that he could perfectly see and speak; the people, amazed at this great miracle, concluded that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the son of *David*. The Pharisees, to hinder persons from becoming his disciples, maliciously gave out, that tho' Jesus did cast out devils, yet he did this, not by any divine power, but meerly by the power of *Belzebub*, the prince of the devils. Our Saviour, to obviate and remove this reflection, endeavours to shew how groundless this their slander and calumny was; and to convince them of the grievousness of the sin, and greatness of the punishment they brought on themselves, by thus scandalizing his miracles, in saying, *they were done by the power of the devil*; he offers three reasons or arguments, sufficient to convince any reasonable man, that his miracles could not be wrought by the devil, but by the spirit of God.

The first was, that it was entirely against the interest of the devil's kingdom to maintain and allow divisions among themselves, or that one devil should eject another; for this was the way to ruin that kingdom. Secondly, they had no more reason to say he cast out devils by *Belzebub*, than to say it of those of their own people or disciples, who either did, or pretended to cast out devils, in the name of the God of *Abraham*, of *Isaac*, and of *Jacob*. But thirdly, which was a demonstrative argument, it plainly appears, both from the design of Christ's miracles, and the tendency of his doctrines, that he was so far from working them by any confederacy of the devil, that Christ was the greatest enemy the devil had. For he was his superior and overcame him, binding the strong man, spoiling his house, and doing all the mischief he could to his kingdom. And having thus by these three arguments vindicated himself from their slanders, he proceeds to testify against their sin, and to warn them

them of the punishment that attended it, in the words of the text. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." As if he had said, "your charge against me is groundless, you having no reason to say, *that I cast out devils by the help of the devil*; for even you yourselves are convinced that you slander my work, (for our Saviour knew their thoughts) and if ye will speak according to your heart, you must confess they are true miracles, and done by the spirit of God. And since this is your case, consider what a grievous crime you are guilty of, in thus vilifying the good spirit of God, and calling him a devil. *All other sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men, but this blasphemy of yours, is of so horrible a nature, that whoever is guilty of it, shall never be forgiven, but is in danger of eternal damnation.*"

This being the true meaning of our Saviour's discourse, it is evident, that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and speaking against him, wholly related to the Pharisees; and that this blasphemy and speaking against the spirit, was in fact their asserting that our Saviour cast out devils, and performed his other miracles by *Belzebub*; or, that it was an impure spirit that did these works, than which there could not be a greater blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. And this is yet more clear in this passage of our Saviour. "That all other sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men, but he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. *Because, saith he, the Pharisees said, he had an unclean spirit*†." If any ask why this calumny of the Pharisees should be rather stiled a blasphemy against our Saviour than the Holy Ghost; the reason

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† Mark 3. 28. 29. 30.

is, that all miracles and extraordinary works, whether performed by the prophets, or by our Saviour, or his apostles, are in scripture constantly attributed to the Holy Spirit, as the effects of his power and operation; and therefore to say, that our Saviour's miracles were done by the devil, was an immediate affront to the Holy Ghost, who wrought them. Our Saviour says, *that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof, at the day of judgment.* That is, all false and scandalous words. And if we shall be called to a severe account for every slander and calumny that we vent against others; much more must we expect this, when we calumniate and slander the Holy Ghost, by ascribing his works to *Belzebub*.

But I proceed to shew, what is meant by those lesser sins, here opposed to the sin against the Holy Ghost; which shall be forgiven unto men, tho' the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not. These are all manner of sin and blasphemy; and in particular speaking a word against the son of man; which shall be forgiven unto men. As for the first, *all manner of sin and blasphemy*, means no more, than all manner of affronts and slanders committed against others. This seems to be the right interpretation, because our Saviour is not here speaking of any sins, but slander and blasphemy. And his design was to shew how much the slander and blasphemy of the Holy Ghost exceeded all other slanders in guilt. And as for that other lesser sin, *speaking a word against the son of man*; that is, against Jesus Christ, it means, to talk slightly and reproachfully of him; as calling him a glutton, or wine-bibber, as several of the Jews did. So that what our Saviour said, is to this effect. "I say unto you, that all manner of slanders and blasphemy, wherewith men slander others, shall be forgiven them, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost

Ghost shall not be forgiven them. And whoever flanders or speaks evil of me, who am a prophet sent from God, by disparaging either my person, or my doctrine, even this shall be forgiven him. But whoever speaks against the miracles that I do, and saith they are done by the power of the devil, this is so horrid a blasphemy, that it shall never be forgiven him, either in this world or the other."

And the reason why speaking against the miracles of our Saviour, is of so heinous and damning a nature, above all other blasphemies, is because the miracles our Saviour wrought, were the principal evidence that he gave, or could give, of his being sent from God, and consequently the great means of converting mankind to his religion. And therefore to speak against them, and attribute them to the power of the devil, was the most spiteful, malicious and mischievous blasphemy that could be committed; because it was the only effectual way to hinder people from believing on him, and consequently to defeat all God's gracious ends of bringing men to salvation by the gospel, than which the devil himself could not do worse.

I proceed to consider the importance of these words, *that it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* What our Saviour seems to mean here, is, that this sin of the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, shall be severely punished, both in this world and the next. The phrase by which he expresseth it, was familiar to those he spoke to. It was a received notion among the Jews, that for some sins, a man was pardoned upon his repentance; other sins were not pardoned till the solemn day of expiation, which came once a year; and other greater sins were not to be expiated, but by some great temporal affliction. But yet all sins that could not be pardoned these ways, were expiated by death, supposing the man was an Israelite.

To this opinion of theirs our Saviour seems to allude. As if he had said, "This blasphemy and open affront that you put upon the spirit of God, is a crime of so high a nature, that it shall not be expiated either in this life, or at your death; but those that are guilty of it shall have a miserable portion, both in this world and that which is to come."

This seems to be the full importance of this expression.

There are some who ask whether the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is absolutely unpardonable. But this is an enquiry more curious than necessary; because it no way concerns us, who cannot be supposed to have sinned against the Holy Ghost, nor yet capable of doing it. However, it may not be amiss to give some satisfaction to timorous and scrupulous persons, leaving it to every one to receive or reject what is offered. And it is the opinion of several most eminent and learned divines, that our Saviour's words are not to be taken in an absolute, but in a comparative sense; and that when he says "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men;" he means no more than that all other sins and blasphemies shall sooner be forgiven, than this against the Holy Ghost. So that according to this sense, which I confess I think to be the true one, our Saviour does not here speak either of the pardonableness of some sins, or the unpardonableness of others; but only comparatively, of the much greater danger and difficulty of obtaining pardon for the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost than for any other blasphemy.

But if we suppose the sense of them to be, that all other calumnies and blasphemies may be forgiven unto men, but that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven unto men; yet even then let it be observed, that it does not from thence follow, that there is any sin that shall not be pardoned

upon

upon repentance. For it is a certain truth, that there is no such great sin, but if the sinner do sincerely repent, he may hope for mercy at God's hands. And if he who is guilty of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, do not, or shall not find mercy, it is purely because he doth not, or cannot repent of it. That is, when a man is come to such a high degree of malice, impudence and obstinacy in sinning, that he dares affront the Holy Ghost, by ascribing his works to the devil; it is just in God to deny that person such grace as may be necessary to his repentance and pardon; and to leave him without remedy, in the condition he hath brought himself into. And upon this supposition only it is that the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable. But this is also the case of other sinners, who have not committed this sin. Many persons may have sinned so long and obstinately, that God may have forsaken them before they die, and the sins of such shall never be forgiven, because they shall never repent.

So that the unpardonableness of the sin against the Holy Ghost, is no bar to our exhorting and encouraging all sorts of persons to repentance, even the greatest sinners; nor yet any hindrance to their hopes of pardon, if they do repent; no more than is the guilt of any other heinous sin. We may safely promise pardon to all true penitents, for all sins whatsoever without exception. "God did not, (saith *Athanasius*) say to him that blasphemeth and repents, it shall not be forgiven; but to him that blasphemeth and remains in his blasphemy. For there is no sin that God will not pardon to them that worthily repent." To this I farther add, that those words of our Saviour's, taking them even in their rigorous sense, doth not exclude all who sin against the Holy Ghost, from all possibility of repentance, nor of obtaining pardon. For there are several

degrees of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This sin of blasphemy may be aggravated, with more knowledge, wilfulness, and malice in some than in others; and those who are less sinful are greater objects of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. And the very persons that our Saviour charges with the sin against the Holy Ghost, and who afterwards crucified him; our Saviour prays, that the sin of these might be forgiven; and to whom also St. *Peter* afterwards preached, and called upon to wash away their sin by baptism and repentance. Which shews that the case of all were not desperate, but that some might repent and be forgiven. Having thus explained the difficulties in the text, I will next enquire, whether Christians can now be guilty of this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? And what are the sins that come nearest to it? And this enquiry is the more necessary, because several persons are apt to fancy that they are guilty of this unpardonable sin. And

If we take the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost precisely as our Saviour here speaks of it, no man now living can possibly be guilty thereof; because no one can be in those circumstances that they were, whom he charged it upon; and who, tho' eye-witnesses of his miracles, and had the greatest evidence of the truth of them, yet they attributed them to sorcery and witchcraft. So that none but those that lived then, can be guilty of this blasphemy. And it is impossible for one who professeth Christianity, as long as he does so, to commit this crime. For whoever professeth Christianity, let him be never so wicked otherwise, yet as he pretends or professes to believe the true religion, and that Christ was a true prophet, he cannot at the same time say, that Christ was an impostor, and wrought miracles by the power of the devil, which as I before observed, is the only blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, mentioned

tioned in the gospel. But any man who believes there was such a person as Jesus, that he preached such doctrine, led such a life, wrought such miracles, as he is recorded to have done; and yet, contrary to his own conviction, saith, that this Jesus did these extraordinary works by the power of the devil; or doth ascribe the mighty works done by the apostles and the first Christians, to the power of the devil: Such a man hath blasphemed the Holy Ghost in the same kind, tho' in different circumstances, that the Pharisees did. Again,

All atheistical persons, who deny the being of God and providence, and scoff at all religion, and would make others believe it is a meer cheat and imposture; tho' these are not guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, because they do not believe our Saviour's miracles; yet they have sinned as much or more against their natural light, and are guilty of as great or greater blasphemy against God the father, than the Pharisees were; and the sin of such persons will be rather more unpardonable than those of the Pharisees. Indeed, a total apostacy from the Christian religion, is of all other sins, the nearest to the sin against the Holy Ghost; and as severe things are said by the apostle against it, as what our Saviour hath done against the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost.

But there are other sins, which tho' not of so horrid a nature as this great unpardonable sin, yet have in them a natural tendency towards it. And which every one who truly regards his soul, ought to avoid. Such are profane drolling upon religion, and ridiculing the holy scriptures and the Christian faith; also infidelity and not believing Christ's religion, notwithstanding all the evidence we have of the truth of it. Tho' these are not direct blasphemies against the Holy Ghost, yet they have some affinity to it; and those who are guilty of them,

will have a sad account to make at the day of judgment, unless they timely repent of such sins.

“† Some think that every deliberate sin against knowledge, and after conviction, is the sin against the Holy Ghost. This no doubt, is a very great aggravation of sin, and such as calls for a great and particular repentance; but does by no means render a man incapable of forgiveness. Others are troubled with blasphemous thoughts, and those they think to be the sin against the Holy Ghost. But this is generally the meer effect of melancholy, and the persons troubled with these sad thoughts are no way consenting to them, but they arise in their minds against their wills, and without their approbation. And so far from being the unpardonable sin, I hope and believe they are no sins at all, but only the unhappy effects of bodily distemper; and will be no more imputed to us, than the wild ravings of a man in a fever. And God forbid that the natural effects of a disease should bring guilt upon our souls. So that these persons have reason enough for comfort, did not their distemper render them incapable of it.

The only practical use I shall make of this discourse is, to caution men against the degrees and approaches of this sin. For if the sin against the Holy Ghost be unpardonable, then all approaches towards it must be dreadful. Such as scoffing at religion, abusing the holy scriptures, rejecting the evidence of Christianity, persevering obstinately in a sinful vicious course, notwithstanding all the motives and arguments of the gospel to persuade men to repentance. Sinning against the clear conviction of our consciences, and the motions of God's good spirit to the contrary. Malicious opposing the truth, when the arguments for it, are evident to any unprejudiced mind. These are sins of a high nature

Disc. CXVII. *The terrors of the Lord, &c.* 131

nature, and come the nearest to this great and unpardonable sin. And if they are long continued in, we know not how soon God may withdraw his grace from us, and suffer us to be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.

Let us then be ready to entertain the truth whenever it is fairly proposed to us, and with such evidence as we are willing to allow of, in other matters. Let us do nothing contrary to our known duty, but be careful in all things to obey the convictions of our own conscience, and to yield to the good motions and suggestions of God's Holy Spirit, who works secretly upon the minds of men; and often gently inspires us with good thoughts and inclinations, and is grieved when we do not comply with them; and after many repulses will at last withdraw himself from us, and leave us to be assaulted with the temptations of the devil, and to be hurried away by our own lusts, into ruin and perdition.

DISCOURSE CXVII. *Stillingsfleet.*

The terrors of the Lord, should deter sinners.

2 Cor. 5. 11.

Therefore knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

THE Christian religion, whether we consider the authority of those who first published it, or the weighty arguments it contains, and their agreeableness to the most prevailing passions of human nature,

nature, is in all respects the best contrived of any religion, to accomplish so noble a design, as the reformation of mankind. The great holiness of those who preached it, the clearness and evidence, the strength and efficacy of their reasoning, are mighty advantages for that purpose. No arguments can be more proper to persuade mankind, than those which work on their reason and consideration ; no motives more prevalent to stir them up to the exercise of it, than their own happiness and misery ; no happiness and misery so much deserves regard, as that which is eternal. And this immortal state, the Christian religion describes, with the greatest plainness, confirms with the strongest evidence, and enforces on the consciences of men, with the most powerful and persuasive rhetoric. The apostle's design was to *persuade men* ; that is, to convince their judgments, to gain their affections, and reform their lives. The argument they used for this end, was no less than *the terrors of the Lord* † ; not the frowns of the world, the fear of men, nor the malice of devils ; but the terrors of the Almighty, whose majesty makes the devils tremble, whose power is irresistible, whose wrath is insupportable. Not the *terrors of the Lord* in this world, which yet is dreadful enough ; but that which shall be displayed at the dreadful day of judgment, when we *must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad* *. The terror which relates to our final and eternal state, in another world, is what the apostle means. And this he speaks, not from poetical fables, ancient traditions, uncertain conjectures, or probable arguments, but from full assurance of the truth he delivers ; *knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*.

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† 2 Cor. 5. 11. * 2 Cor. 5. 10.

The gospel contains a mixture of the highest clemency and greatest severity, the richest mercy and strictest justice, the most glorious rewards and most intolerable punishments; we there find God described as a tender father and terrible judge, as a God of peace and vengeance, as an everlasting happiness, a consuming fire. And the Son of God, as coming once with great humility, and to come again with majesty and great glory; as appearing once, with all the infirmities of human nature, and again with all the demonstrations of a divine power and presence; once, as the Son of God to take away the sins of the world by his death and passion; and again, as judge of the world, with flaming fire, to execute vengeance on all impenitent sinners. The intermixing these doctrines in the gospel, was intended for the benefit of mankind, that such whom the condescension of his first appearance could not oblige to leave their sins, the terror of his second coming may astonish, when they know that their ingratitude and disobedience will be examined into; that such who despise the meanness of his birth, the poverty of his life, and shame of his death, may be filled with horror and amazement, when they consider the majesty of his second coming in the clouds, to “execute judgment upon all, to convince all that are ungodly, not only of their ungodly deeds, but of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against them †.” And we shall easily see what great reason there is that Christ’s second coming to judgment should be called the *terror of the Lord*, if we consider the following particulars. As,

I. The terror of the preparation for it, which is thus described by St. *Peter*; “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements

elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up ||."

This day will come and surprize us *as a thief in the night*, which makes it the more dreadful, because surprizals confound mens thoughts, deject their spirits, and betray the succours which reason offers. But when surprize shall be the least astonishing circumstance of men's misery, what horror will possess their minds at the apprehension of it? What confusion and amazement may we suppose he was in, who being pleased with the fulness of his condition, "said to his soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry; but God said to him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall all those things be that thou hast provided †?" Had God only said, this night thy barns shall be burnt, and thy substance consumed to ashes, that must occasion him a strange present consternation, tho' he might have comforted himself with the hopes of living and getting more. But, *this night shall thy soul be required of thee.*

O dreadful words! O the tremblings of body, the anguish of mind, the pangs and convulsions of conscience, which they must occasion! What sad reflections must they create? That the pleasure he had promised himself for many years, should have an end in a very few hours? His mirth so suddenly turned into bitter howlings, his ease into a bed of flames? O miserable creature! to be thus deceived by his own folly, and after so many warnings, be surprized and betrayed into everlasting misery?

These are the agonies of only one single person, whom death snatches away, in the midst of his years, pleasure and hopes; but this will be the case of too many in the terrible day of the Lord, which *as*

a snare shall come on all them, that dwell on the face of the earth †. If some of the expressions used by St. Luke, concerned the unexpected coming of Christ to judgment upon *Jerusalem*; yet we are also to consider them as not only the fore-runner, but figure of Christ's coming to judge the world. But then, the burning of *Jerusalem* was a very imperfect representation of the general terror of mankind at the conflagration of the world. *When the heavens shall pass away, with a great noise, or mighty force, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.* When all the fiery bodies in the upper regions of the world, which have so long remained in an even regular course, shall then be let loose; and by a rapid, violent motion, put the world into a flame and confusion. So that the earth and all things therein, shall be turned into one funeral pile. Then the foundation of the earth shall be shaken, and God will rain fire and brimstone from heaven; so that nothing shall be able to resist or withstand the force of his merciless fury. What will then become of the most magnificent piles, the most curious structures, the most stately palaces, the most lasting monuments, the most pleasant gardens and delightful countries, and all the glories of this world? They shall be all buried in one common heap of ruins, the whole face of the earth shall be like the top of mount *Ætna*, nothing but rubbish, stones, and ashes. What will then signify the pride and gallantry of the vain, the large possessions of the great, or the vast treasures of the rich? And what will become of the wicked and ungodly, who have scoffed at these things, *and walked after their own lusts, saying, where is the promise of his coming* *. When this great day of wrath comes, how will they stand or escape his fury? If they hide themselves in dens and rocks, they will then fall

† Luke 21. 35. 17. 26. 27. &c. * 2 Pet. 3. 3. 4.

fall into the burning furnaces of the earth; and the mountains may fall upon them, but can never hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. If they go down into the deep parts of the sea; even there storms, tempests and showers of fire shall overtake them, and God's vengeance pursue them, with everlasting flames. Well therefore may Christ's coming to judgment be called *the terror of the Lord*. For can any thing be imagined more full of horror and amazement, than to see the world in a flame, about us? to see the earth every where vomit and cast up fire, the sea to boil like water in a seething pot; to hear nothing but perpetual claps of thunder, to see no light in the heavens but the flashing of lightning? And yet even this comes far short of the terrors and fears of this great day. For the expressions of scripture do not mean that the world shall be only destroyed by the anger of God, but that this destruction shall be by real fire.

2. The terror of Christ's appearance; which scripture represents to us to be such as may render the apprehensions of it the more awful. As that he will come "in the clouds of heaven, all the heavenly host attending him, with power and great glory; and sending his angels with a great sound of a trumpet before him. After whom the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch angel, and the trump of God †." Not that we are to imagine any material trumpet; but the sound of the last trumpet seems to be the same with the *voice of the son of God, which the dead are said to hear and live* *. That is, it shall be an effectual power for raising the dead, louder than any trumpet. His second coming is also described, as "sitting on the throne of his glory, and all the holy angels about him, and all nations gathered

† Mat. 24. 25. 2 Thes. 1. 7. 1 Thes. 4. 16.

* John 5. 25.

thered before him †", to receive their sentence. His throne will be most magnificent and glorious, and so dreadful, that from it will *proceed lightnings, thunderings and voices*; his majesty so terrible, that *heaven and earth will fly from his face, the dead, small and great, are to stand before him, to be judged according to their works* *. And if the appearance of a common judge is dreadful to a guilty prisoner, if the majesty of an earthly prince begets awe and reverence, where there is no fear of punishment; what may we imagine when justice and majesty both meet in the person of the judge; fear and guilt in the conscience of criminals. If the sight on Mount Sinai was so terrible to *Moses, that he did exceedingly fear and quake* §. If the vision which *Isaiab* had of God's glory, made him cry out, "*woe is me, for I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts* †; If when *Daniel* saw his vision, all his strength and vigour was gone, so that *he stood trembling* ||, tho' an angel had raised him from the ground. If these whom God appeared to in a way of kindness, were so possessed with fear, what horror must needs seize on the minds of the wicked, when the *Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, on purpose to take vengeance on them* |||. If there appeared so much majesty in our Saviour's countenance, when the officers came to apprehend him, that they *went backward and fell to the ground* ‡; how dreadful must it be, when he will manifest that glory to the world, which he then concealed? If in the short time of his transfiguration, his own disciples could not behold the glory of his presence, but they *fell on their faces and were sore afraid* ††, how shall his enemies abide the day of his wrath, or stand

† Mat. 25. 31. * Rev. 20. 11. § Heb. 12. 21.

‡ Isai. 6. 5. || Dan. 10. 8. 11. ||| 2 Thes. 1. 7-8.

‡ John. 18. 6. †† Mat. 17. 2. 6. Mark. 9. 6.

stand before him, when he shall appear in the full glory of his majesty and power?

3. The terror of that day's proceedings; for then "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil." How full of terror will the proceedings of that day be, wherein all secrets shall be disclosed, all persons actions examined and judged? This is the time of darkness, of disputes and quarrels; but *in the day, when the righteous judgment of God shall be revealed* ||, then the wisdom and justice of divine providence shall be made manifest to all, for *every one shall receive according to his work*: and none will wonder at the sentence, when they see the evidence. Then the most secret impurities, the most subtle hypocrisy, the most artificial fraud, the most dissembled malice, shall be exposed to public view. For then *God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart* *. Then all the intrigues of lust and ambition will turn only to men's shame and reproach. With what horror will they then behold all the sins of their lives made public, set in order before them? How will men then curse themselves for being so easily tempted, and also those who laid traps to betray them! What different apprehensions will men then have of sin, from what they have now! How will a sinner then lament and say, "had I believed this would have been the end of a sinful life, I would have taken more care to prevent this misery. O the folly of intemperance, the mischief of ambition, the rage of lust, the unsatiableness of covetousness, the madness of debauchery, and the dull stupidity of atheism! What satisfaction is all the pleasures of sin to me, now I have lost my soul forever? O that I had time to grow wise again, and resist the cheats

cheats of a deceitful world ! my sins are as fresh in my remembrance as if they were yesterday committed, and their burden heavier than the weight of mountains. O that I could see the end of my misery !” Nor will the only terror in the proceedings of that day, be for wicked men to have the several circumstances and aggravations of their sins set before them, and even that cannot be without horror and amazement ; but their actions also must be strictly and severely examined, by a most powerful holy and just judge. And if it is so troublesome to remember in this world those wicked actions we have loved and delighted in ; what will it be when they are all enumerated before the judgment-seat of Christ, who hates and abhors them ; if men cannot endure to have their vices here represented to them, how will they bear the exposing them to the view of the whole world ? if sins that we here despised for being little ; and were disregarded for their frequency, and laughed at as insignificant, shall appear to have a greater malignity, than men imagined ; what must we think of such presumptuous sins, that offered violence to God’s laws and the dictates of mens consciences ? Nor will length of time abate the severity of God’s enquiry, or lessen his displeasure against them. For tho’ God in this world tempers his severity with mercy, we have no reason to expect it in another.

This is the time of *God’s patience and forbearance, and goodness towards sinners, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* * ; but if men will despise his goodness, abuse his patience, and reject the means of salvation, then to their sorrow, and by dreadful experience shall they find, that there is a day of wrath to come, and that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* †. For that will be a day of justice and

* Rom. 2. 4. 2 Pet. 3. 9. † Heb. 10. 31.

and execution without further patience. Then no trifling excuses will be taken to palliate sins, and give ease to the minds of men. It will be in vain to charge our wilful sins on the infirmity of our nature, the power of temptation, the subtilty of the devil, the allurements of company, the practice of the world, the corruption of the age, the fault of education, or the folly of youth; such excuses will be then too weak to be accepted, when it will appear to the eternal confusion of such, that their own vicious inclinations were the only occasion of them. Then there will be no room for intreaties, or vain excuses. God now shews his great pity and indulgence to mankind, in being so ready to hear the prayers, and grant the petitions of all penitent sinners. But for those who despise his instruction, disregard the reproofs of his word, the rebukes of their own consciences; who contemn and scoff at religion; what can they expect, but that when “*they shall call upon him, he will not answer, and when they seek him earnestly, they shall not find him; but he will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh* *.” O blessed Jesus! didst thou weep over an incorrigible people in the days of thy flesh, and wilt thou slight their miseries when thou judgest the world? didst thou then intreat and beseech sinners to be reconciled, and wilt thou not hear them in the day of thy judgment, when in the anguish of their souls they cry unto thee? Thus we see the mighty difference between Christ’s coming as a Saviour, and as a judge; between the day of our salvation and the day of his wrath; between the joy in heaven at the conversion of penitent sinners, and the confusion of the wicked and impenitent. How terrible is God’s wrath represented, when he punishes a people in this world for their sins? it is called, *the day of the Lord’s vengeance,*

* Prov. 1. 25. 26. 27.

geance, *the great and dreadful day of the Lord* *. If it was thus when his wrath was kindled but a little, when mercy was mixed with his severity, what will it be when he shall stir up all his wrath, when the heavens and earth that never offended him, shall shake? What shall they then do who have displeased him? Then neither power, wisdom, eloquence, nor craft, will be of any signification, for the great judge of that day, can neither be over-awed by power, exceeded in wisdom, moved by eloquence, nor betrayed by craft; but every man shall receive according to his deeds. The mighty conquerors shall then stand unattended with armies to receive their sentence; the most renowned for wisdom and knowledge will then find that a sincere honest heart will more avail, than the greatest subtilty, or deepest learning; the most eloquent persons without true goodness, will, like the man without a wedding-garment, *be then speechless* ||; the most crafty and politic will then see, that tho' they here deceive themselves and others, yet *God will not be mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he reap.*

4. The terror of the sentence which shall then be passed. This the judge hath already told us, to make us more apprehensive of it in this state, when we may prevent it, by sincere repentance and a holy life. The terror of it is, *depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* †. Words full of horror and amazement, if the importance of them is duly considered. Indeed wicked men are so little apprehensive of the great misery in *departing from God*, that they place their felicity here, in being at a distance from him. For while they pursue their lusts, the thoughts of God are uneasy to them. But

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* Isai. 13. 9. 34. 9. Mal. 4. 5. Joel 2. 31.

† Mat. 22. 12. ‡ Mat. 25.

part of the misery hereafter will be, that men shall not be able to cheat and abuse themselves with false notions of happiness. The satisfaction they had in their lusts will cease, and nothing remain but the sad remembrance thereof, to torment them. The righteous shall see God, which implies the greatest happiness. But the wicked shall depart from him, wherein is comprehended the highest misery imaginable. The scripture account of the joys and torments of another world, is more suited to our fancy than understanding; thence we read of setting down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, to represent the happiness of the state; and of a *gnawing worm, a devouring fire, and blackness of darkness*, to express the misery thereof. But as the happiness of heaven infinitely exceeds the most lofty metaphors of scripture, so does the misery of hell surpass the most dreadful representation we can give of it. No word can fully express the anguish and torment of the soul, in future misery; *where the worm shall never die, the fire shall never be quenched*. As to what some object against the truth and injustice of this punishment, by saying, that there is no proportion, between the sins of this short life, and the eternal misery of another; in order to answer the objection, let me ask such, whether among men, it is not thought just and reasonable, to confine a person to perpetual imprisonment for a fault he was not an hour committing? nay, do not the laws of all nations make death the punishment of some crimes, which are very suddenly perpetrated? and yet death eternally deprives a man of all comforts of life. Shall then what is so constantly practised and universally justified in the world, be condemned as unreasonable, when applied to God? But say some, if by eternal death, annihilation was only meant, there could be no exception to it. To which I answer by asking, whether it would be unjust for human laws to deprive offenders of life,

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supposing their souls to survive their bodies, and they forever sensible of the loss of life? if not, why shall not God preserve the honour of his laws, and vindicate his authority in governing the world, by sentencing obstinate sinners to the greatest misery, tho' their souls forever live in the apprehension of it? Especially, since God hath beforehand so evidently declared these things, made them part of his laws, set everlasting life on the other side, to balance everlasting misery, and in such a manner proposed them to a sinner's option, that nothing but contempt of God and his grace, and wilful impenitency, can ever betray men into this dreadful state of eternal destruction. Thus much for the argument used by the apostle, *the terror of the Lord.*

I shall now consider the assurance he gives of the truth of it. *Knowing then the terror of the Lord we persuade men.* It is of excellent use to produce the common apprehensions of mankind, as to a future judgment, and the several arguments insisted on to that purpose; for if the thing was unreasonable to be believed, how come men, without revelation, to agree that it was just and reasonable. If the conflagration of the world was an impossible thing, how came it so anciently received by the oldest and wisest philosophers? How came it to be maintained by the *Epicureans* and *Stoicks*? Indeed they made these conflagrations periodical and not final. But then we should not reject that as impossible, which they assert hath been and may be done. The truth and certainty of this doctrine we prove from the word of God. We may indeed think a judgment to come reasonable in general, from the consideration of God's goodness, wisdom and justice; yet all this depends on the supposition, that God governs the world by laws, and not by power. But since God, who is the supreme judge of the world, hath himself declared, *that he will bring every work*

into judgment, whether it be good or evil || ; since the Son of God made this so great a part of his doctrine, and declares the circumstances of his coming again for this end ; since when on earth, he opened his commission he received from his father, by declaring, that “ the Father had committed all judgment to the Son, and that the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation †.” Since it was so great a part of the apostles doctrine, to preach of this judgment to come ‡ ; no wonder St. Paul speaks of it with so great assurance, *knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord we persuade men*. And none have the least reason to question it, but such as totally reject the Christian doctrine on the pretences of infidelity, which are so vain and trifling, that were not their lusts stronger than their arguments, men of sense would be ashamed to produce them. To apply then what has been said.

Seeing “ all these things shall be dissolved, and knowing the terror of the Lord, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all manner of conversation *.” There is a great variety of arguments in the Christian religion, to persuade men to holiness, but none more affecting to the generality of mankind, than the *terrors of the Lord* ; and if that will not prevail, there is no reason to expect that any argument should. If an almighty power cannot awaken us, if infinite justice cannot terrify us, if a judgment to come will not make us tremble, and eternal misery leave no impression on us, what other arguments or methods can reclaim us ? But if neither temporal judgments and mercies, nor the considerations of future ones hereafter, will make

|| Eccles. 12. 14. † 5. 22, &c. ‡ Acts 17. 31.
2. Pet. 3. 11.

men better in this life ; judgment without mercy, shall be their portion in another. O the insatiating power of sin ! when neither the pity of an indulgent father, nor the frowns of a severe judge can, draw us from it ; when neither the bitter passion of the Son of God for our sins, nor his threatening to come again to take vengeance for them, can make us hate and abhor them ; when neither the shame nor contempt, the diseases and reproaches which attend sin in this world, nor the intolerable anguish and misery of another, can make men sensible of their danger so as to forsake them. Could we represent to our minds, that state wherein we must all shortly be, when the business, pleasures and diversions of this world shall cease, and every one must give an account of himself to God ; what a different opinion of these things shall we then have in our minds ? and with what abhorrency look on every temptation to sin ? how shall we hate the sight of those who betrayed us into sin, or flattered us afterwards ? Did men ask themselves this reasonable question, why they will defy God, by violating his laws, unless they were sure he either could not, or would not punish them for it ? they would be more afraid to offend him. For to do it, supposing both, is perfect madness ; and to question his power, who is almighty, or his will who hath declared it, and which is immutable, would be the height of folly. How desperate then must the condition of such be, whom no arguments can persuade to leave their sins. In the other state, there is no breaking prison, no escaping tryal, no corrupting the judge, no reversing the sentence, no pardon after judgment, no reprieve from punishment, no abatement or end of misery. O impenitent sinner ! how then canst thou hope, either to fly from or endure God's wrath, that is swiftly coming to arrest thee by death, and convey thee to thy tormenting prison ? Canst thou

hope God will discharge thee before that dreadful day comes, when he confines thee there on purpose for it? Canst thou think that day will never come, which the vindication of God's justice, the honour of Christ, the happiness of the blessed, as well as the punishment of the wicked, make it so highly necessary that it should come? or canst thou hope thou to defend thyself against an all-seeing eye, a most righteous judge, and an accusing conscience? When all the mercies thou hast abused, the judgments thou hast slighted, the motions of grace thou hast resisted, the checks of conscience thou hast stifled, and all the sins thou hast committed, shall rise up in judgment to condemn thee; Grant, O God, that we all may have wisdom to consider these things in time, that the terror of the Lord may persuade us, to break off our sins by a sincere repentance, and so to live, that we may die with peace, comfort and assurance of being ever with the Lord. in his eternal joy.

DISCOURSE CXVIII. Abp. Hort.

Things temporal and eternal compared.

2 Cor. 4. 18.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

THE apostle in this chapter informs us of the great hardships and perils to which he and Timothy had been exposed while they were propagating the Christian faith; and from thence proceeds to shew the grounds of their wonderful patience and constancy under those trials, namely, their firm belief and hope of a resurrection to eternal life, as a reward of their present sufferings. "For which cause we faint not," says he, "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." v. 17. Heavy as these afflictions were, they seemed light and insignificant, when compared with the great reward that was certainly to follow. Tho' these holy men exposed themselves to so much misery, yet they had better supports and prospects than the world was aware of. Their eyes were fixed on that recompence of reward, on that crown of glory which waited for them beyond time and the grave. It was this, and not the ambition of triumphs and statues, the honour of Pagan heroes, that inspired their Christian warfare. If we confi-

der these words as expressing the heavenly frame and temper of the apostles minds, which were habitually abstracted from the pleasures and pursuits of this world, and fixed upon the next ; they may be rendered of very extensive use, as they give us the great and distinguishing character of every pious Christian ; which is *to walk by faith and not by sight*. And to have all his designs and actions influenced by the hopes and fears of hereafter, and not of this present life. It will be proper then to explain what is meant by things seen, and not seen ; and what by looking at them.

By the things that *are seen*, we are to understand, all sensible objects of this lower world, which affect us, either with pleasure or pain, good or evil, and are the common subjects of mens cares and pursuits, hopes and fears. All those good things that are necessary for the support of our bodies, or the gratification of our natural appetites and desires ; and all those evil things, such as pain, poverty, persecution, hunger, thirst, and whatever is grievous to human nature, are comprehended under the denomination of *things that are seen*. By the things that are *not seen*, we must understand the joys and felicities that are prepared for all Christians in heaven ; such as “fulness of joy in God’s presence, and pleasures that are at his right hand for evermore. Of being for ever with the Lord. Of things prepared for them that love God, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” And tho’ at present we can form no distinct idea of these things, yet we may be certain in general, that good men will pass into a state of happiness exceeding great and glorious, after the resurrection. These are the things *not seen* ; such as being distant and future cannot be the objects of our bodily senses. And yet good Christians do now see them by the eye of faith,

faith, and in some measure enjoy them by hope and expectation: For *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* ||.

By looking at these unseen things, is meant, a firm belief, that such things do really and truly exist. That this transitory life, at the longest, is not the whole of our duration, but only the first stage of it. That the scriptures account of a future state are not the inventions and contrivances of statesmen and priests, to enslave the consciences of men, by the apprehension of another world; but that there is as certainly a heaven and hell, for rewards and punishments, as we are now alive, and which all men will find so by experience. And without this fundamental point, all religion must fall to the ground. For it appears by daily observation, that arguments drawn from the beauty, excellency and conveniency of virtue, are weak things, when opposed to mens corrupt lusts and appetites; and therefore the gospel supplies this defect, by assuring us, that "godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come †." Again, the looking at things which are not seen, implies our chusing heavenly enjoyments for our chief happiness. The foundation of that great patience and courage, which the apostles shewed under persecutions and sufferings, was the reward they expected after this life; for this was the sum of their hopes and desires. St. Paul having shewn his contempt of worldly things, the loss of which he *counted but as dung, so he might win Christ*; adds; *but this one thing I do, I press towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. That is, in running my Christian race, I chearfully part with all the enjoyments of this world, as bearing no comparison with the heavenly felicities, which I have

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|| Heb. 11. 1. † 1 Tim. 4. 8.

chosen for my portion. These invisible things, which are only to be discerned by the eye of faith, draw all my attention, and engage my unwearied pursuit:

Hence we may observe, what the different characters are between a wicked and good man; that every wicked man chuses his happiness only by his senses; his aims and prospects are all linked to this present life, and his whole business is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Nothing appears valuable to him but gold and silver, and large possessions of land; nothing delightful and pleasant, but the gratification of his appetites; nothing great and honourable, but power, titles and worldly splendor: These are the only things good and desirable to him, with which his heart is contented and he looks no further. But the desires of a religious man are not so easily satisfied; for his happiness is of a different kind: He considers the dignity of his nature, and requires a happiness fit for a reasonable creature; he has no notion of any supreme good but God, nor of any true felicity but that of heaven; and while others are vainly running from one object to another, endeavouring to find new pleasures, that will satisfy without cloying; the language of his soul is, "Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee! my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever *." A wicked man is all for the present, saying, let us eat and drink for to morrow we die; but a religious man is more thoughtful and considerate, he looks after things that are not seen, for his eternal inheritance. Again,

To look at things which are not seen, is to make them the great and governing principle of all our views, in the general conduct of our lives. Our being

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in this world is meerly a state of tryal and probation, wherein we are to prepare ourselves for those rewards that are in the next life ; which will be greater or less, according to our behaviour here, and the improvement we have made of the talents committed to our charge. We should therefore use the good things of this life, in such a manner, as to render them most subservient to our obtaining those better things which are eternal. As a wise merchant, who travels into remote countries in order to enrich himself, lives frugally abroad, with a view to encrease his stock, and by degrees to make remittances into his own country, where he intends to enjoy the riches he has acquired ; just so every good Christian ought to conduct himself. His main business in this world should be to negotiate his great concerns and interests for the next. For he knows that he is only a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and does not expect to receive the fruits of his labours, till he arrives at heaven. If therefore he has procured worldly riches, he will give food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, medicines to the sick, and release innocent debtors from confinement. He will relieve unhappy families reduced to misfortunes, who are ashamed to beg. He will find out obscure merit and encourage those who by their knowledge have promoted the good of mankind. He is well assured that charity is highly pleasing to God, and that *he who hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again* †. For which reason he thinks it wise to be charitable, and out of his earthly estate, *to lay up treasures in heaven*. But a wicked man thinks all is lost, that is not spent in gratifying his lusts and appetites ; or else foolishly hoards it up without any enjoyment, for his heirs to lavish away.

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† Prov. 19. 17.

The true Christian acts with equal prudence and good conduct, in the use of worldly power and honour. He employs the authority and influence of his superior station, in protecting and countenancing the innocent and virtuous; in suppressing and discouraging vice and vicious men; in rescuing the oppressed and restraining oppressors; in lifting up the humble and modest, and bringing down the proud and insolent. *He is a terror to evil doers and a praise to them who do well.* He is a common refuge to the poor, an assertor of liberty and property, a just magistrate, a lover of his country more than of his own interest. He employs his authority and credit for promoting the honour of God, and the advancement of religion among men. He considers power and honour not to set off his own person, and attract the worship of his inferiors. but as talents committed to his trust; and his great care is to improve them, that he may be always ready to pass his final account. And the pleasures of sense which prove the ruin of others, he turns to the good of his own soul. If his natural appetites are importunate, it affords him an opportunity to approve his virtue, by restraining them within the bounds of temperance. Every taste of God's good creatures excites his gratitude and thanksgiving to his benefactor, and is made a fresh motive to love and obedience. How different this, from the voluptuous man, who, like brute beasts prone to the earth, never lifts up his eyes towards heaven, but receives the bounty of God with a thoughtless and thankless heart? Thus does every good Christian *use this world so as not to abuse it*, by making it the sum of his happiness. Riches, honours and pleasures, which are pursued as the ultimate end by others, are in his esteem, only the means of obtaining things in heaven. All his views and designs centre there, and are made subservient to his obtaining

taining at last, *the things that are not seen*. Lastly, To look at things unseen, is to make them the frequent subjects of our attention and meditation. A man's affections will naturally follow the chief objects of his thoughts. If it be distant in place, his heart is there; if it be future, his thoughts will outfly time, and steal some enjoyment of it beforehand; if it be hard to obtain, the difficulty makes him the more eager and industrious to acquire it.

A religious man, according to scripture, is one that is *spiritually minded, who walks by faith, and not by sight; who sets his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; and whose conversation is in heaven*; whither his soul is often carried upon the wings of holy contemplation and devotion. On the contrary, every wicked man is there described, as one who *minds earthly things; who is carnally minded, and who walks after the flesh*.—Having thus shewn what is meant by the things that *are not seen*; and what by *looking at them*; I will now offer some considerations to excite us to practice. And

The things which are not seen, are much more excellent in their nature, and better fitted to make rational creatures happy, than the things that are seen. The good things of this world are calculated for the support and comfort of our bodies, which being void of all understanding, sense and motion, have no kind of perfection, but what arises from matter. Indeed, the whole structure of the world is most perfectly contrived by the great architect to answer the purposes for which he designed it; but still it is only matter diversified by form and texture, variously to affect our senses, and serve the uses of animal life; and therefore every part of it is liable to dissolution. It is therefore a poor happiness that these things can afford to an intelligent creature, who by his reason alone is of more real value and worth,

than whatever does besides live upon earth. It is departing from the dignity of our nature, to chuse a happiness in common with brute beasts, who have nothing but their senses for their enjoyment. And yet this foolish happiness is the height of a sensual man's ambition; who is governed like them, with present objects, and makes his immortal soul, to become subject to his body. But as our blessed Saviour has *brought life and immortality to light in his gospel*; let us remember this, and shew ourselves men as well as Christians; let us have some regard to the dignity of our natures, by disdaining to be on a level with the lowest creatures, when we may partake with the angels in glory, and enjoy those pure pleasures, *that are at God's right hand for evermore.*

Let us consider, that things invisible are not the less important for not being objects of our present senses; even of material things, those that escape our sight, have the most powerful effects. The gravitation of bodies, which keeps all parts of the world in their proper places; the attraction of the moon, which is the cause of tides; the prodigious force of winds and air, are all caused by invisibles. It is therefore downright ignorance to ascribe so much to visible objects, and so little to invisible ones. Tho' mistakes of this kind in philosophy is not very material, yet with regard to religion, they will prove fatal; because the great springs and motives of it, are all invisible. The being of God, the certainty of a heaven and hell, are considerations of the utmost importance to every man; and and could we possibly see them with our eyes, they would make very powerful impressions upon the stoutest heart. Besides, these invisible things are not the less certain for being future. Where causes are permanent, the effects are as certain as if they actually existed. The rising of the sun to

morrow is a futurity, and yet we are perfectly sure of it. As certainly then as God is just and true, and will judge the world and perform his promises; so sure will the great rewards of virtue follow this life. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is therefore against reason and common sense, to suffer our minds to be so engaged by present objects, as to be inattentive to events of infinite importance, only because they are future.

The last consideration I shall mention, is in the words of the text, "for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." And were they equal in other respects, yet this single difference would be sufficient to determine our choice. This is a motive level to the meanest understanding. No sensible man would chuse a lease for a short term of years, when he might easily have the inheritance. And yet this is the case as to all worldly enjoyments, which at the best are held by a short lease. They can last no longer than this transitory life; and even this short term may be further shortened by innumerable accidents. And could it be insured to seventy or eighty years, yet who can insure its enjoyments? One stroke of divine providence may sweep all away, as it did to *Joh*. Have we not frequent instances of men, that are rich to day and beggars to-morrow? But should life and riches hold out to the last, may not health fail; without which, what are riches, and even life itself? The difference is small between enjoying nothing, and having nothing to enjoy. But if a man by a peculiar felicity should escape these evils, and enjoy health and wealth to old age, which is a period most men desire to see, tho' when it comes they give it a very poor recep-

tion; yet how little is the pleasure when his senses are blunted, and the evil days are come, when he shall say, *I have no pleasure in them?* Thus it is with every man who chuses the things that are seen, for his chief portion. But with the good Christian the case is quite otherwise. He chuses the things that are not seen, because they are liable to none of those casualties and interruptions, and chiefly, because they are eternal; his full enjoyment will not commence till the end of this short life.

Let us therefore study this most useful art, of rendering all the good things of this life, subservient to our obtaining those which are eternal in the next. Let us chuse these for our portion, and make them the daily subjects of our contemplation. If once we can bring ourselves to this divine habit, it will be a means of freeing us from the slavery of our lusts, which are the hardest of all task-masters and tyrants; for they demand all our time, health, riches and honour, as a sacrifice to their service. It will guard us against the danger of evil temptations, which will lose their power, when we have more tempting objects in our eye. This will be a sure method to preserve our virtue, and prevent many a bitter repentance. It will prove a wonderful cordial under all the calamities of this life; *for which cause, says St. Paul, we faint not, for our light afflictions which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* †. Remove this prospect and the difference will immediately be perceived; virtue will languish and droop, the evils of life will appear magnified and formidable. Above all, it is the only support we can have, and a noble one too, upon the near approach of death. This is the time, when the heart of a wicked man sinks within him, to observe the scene of all his joys and comforts flying back-

† 2 Cor. 4. 17.

backwards, as he is going into the great deep of futurity. But then it is that the prospect of a religious man begins to open and rise in view; and those great invisibles that he has so long hoped and wished for, will then change their aspect, and become the objects of sight and fruition. I shall now make an inference or two from what has been said. And

Hence we may conclude, that a good man has no just cause to be afraid of death; for he is secure against all the evil consequences that render it dreadful. *The sting of death is sin.* The expectation of being judged to eternal punishment, for a wicked and impenitent life, is the only just cause of dreading death. But with respect to a good man, this sting is taken out, and he may therefore triumph in these words; "O death! where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory?" And may "thank God, who has given him the victory, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord." For this reason the death of the righteous is often called sleep in the holy scriptures; for they are sure of awaking to a more glorious and happy state, in the morning of the resurrection; and therefore may as contentedly lie down in their graves, as they do in their beds. But to all wicked men, the sting of death is truly terrible; because it puts a final period to their only happiness, and opens the door to endless pains and miseries. They shall indeed rise again, as certain as the righteous; but it is only in order to die the second death. *Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire, this is the second death*†. By death is here meant, all human bodies that ever died, and lay buried in the earth or water; by hell, which signifies *Hades*, we are to understand all the departed spirits or souls that formerly inhabited those dead bodies. These being united in the same persons at the resurrection of the wicked, are to be cast into the place of torment

† Rev. 20. 14.

ment. Let all wicked men therefore consider, that this dreadful day will surely come. Let them paint to themselves that cruel scene and distress, when they shall say "to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb." And where is the hardened sinner, that will not then repent, if he could? But alas! it will be then too late, "For now only is the accepted time, now only is the day of salvation. To day therefore, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

The chief use to be made of this discourse, is to lead us to reformation and amendment of life. I need not here enumerate the particulars of a good life; because there is no man, who has been brought up in the Christian religion, but knows very well how to distinguish between virtue and vice, in their main instances: and by applying to his own conscience, he may be informed, whether he is doing good or evil. All the great and essential parts of virtue and vice are so plainly laid down in the gospel, and so evident to every man's conscience, that he may easily know whether he is acting right or wrong. St. Paul has given a short summary of a Christian's duty in these words. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world †." This short lesson is so full and clear, that no man who is honestly disposed, can miss of the right way to heaven, if he duly attends to it.

Here then is the rule of a good life, which no Christian can mistake, unless he be perverse and wilfully blind. Let him but sincerely endeavour to live up to the precepts of the gospel, and
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he need not doubt of being duly prepared for his final account. And if his life is found conformable to this rule ; if he has used his best endeavours to perform his Christian duty ; and that where he failed thro' the infirmities of his nature, or the strength of temptations ; if he has been truly penitent, and implored the forgiveness of God, and resolved thro' his grace to do so no more ; this is all that will be required by the great judge, according to the indulgent terms of the gospel. But where this main qualification is wanting, nothing else will be admitted in its stead. No high professions, no speculative faith, no zeal for outward observances, and human constitutions, no attachment to religious parties, will pass instead of a good life, or a sincere and uniform obedience to all the laws of the gospel. Our blessed Saviour declares, " that not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, (or who professeth my religion) shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven. God shall render to every man according to his deeds ; to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honour and immortality, he will render eternal life ; but tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

DISCOURSE CXIX. *Clarke.*

The shortness and vanity of worldly happiness.

Job 5. 6. 7.

Altho' affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.

THERE is no book in the old testament that contains greater and fuller acknowledgements of the glory and power of God, nobler and more lively descriptions of the works of creation and providence; more moving and affectionate declarations of the shortness and vanity of human life, and the transitoriness of all worldly enjoyments; clearer and plainer significations of the hope of the best and wisest men in all ages, concerning a resurrection to a future life, than are to be met with in this eloquent book of *Job*.

These words contain, a pathetic description of the shortness and vanity, the sorrows and calamities of human life. "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards;" also a declaration, that these miseries of human life, do not arise from chance or necessity, from blind fate or unaccountable accidents; but from the wise disposition of God's providence, which governs the world. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." And we may from hence infer, that there are many just and good,
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wise and useful ends, why God permits so many afflictions to fall upon men; the consideration of which should teach us patience and chearful resignation to the divine will. These several observations, naturally arising from the words of the text, I shall more particularly consider in the following discourse.

The shortness and vanity, the sorrows and calamities of human life, are most concisely described in these words; *man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.* Afflictions and calamities of various sorts, seem in the course of things as necessarily and constantly to attend the life of man, as it is the nature of light things to ascend upwards, or of things heavy to descend; this is evident by experience. We are born into the world weak and defenceless; we grow up, subject to numberless casualties; and during our whole lives, are perpetually exposed to trouble and danger, which cannot be foreseen nor yet prevented. The weakness and imperfections of childhood, the vanity and follies of youth, the cares and solitudes of manhood, the uneasiness and infirmities of age, closely succeed each other. And in each of these states, we are continually obnoxious to pains and diseases of body; and in most of them to the acuter torment of anxiety and vexations of mind. All which evils are encreased by the accidents and misfortunes of the world, by our own negligences and vices, and by the judgments of God upon ourselves. "Man is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain *. He walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them †. All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and the wicked; to the clean and to the unclean, to the good and to the sinner."

* Job 33, 19. † Psal. 39. 6. Eccl. 9. 2, 3.

The scripture compares the vanity and shortness of human life, to a "vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanished away; to a tale that is told, and then remembered no more; to a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again *;" admonishing us upon all occasions, that "our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. That they are swifter than a post; they flee away, and see no good. That man who is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble, he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. His days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth; for the wind passeth it over, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more †." *Yacob* complains, that *few and evil had the days of the years of his pilgrimage been*; and yet he far exceeded the usual measure of the present age, and enjoyed much larger possessions than the generality of mankind. This shortness and vanity of human life, is so obvious to every man's experience, that it seems needless to remind men of what they cannot but know. And yet so it happens, that the evident certainty of the thing, is the reason why men never attend to it, but live as if they knew it not. It requires no reasoning, no arguing, no meditation, to convince men, that they must shortly die; and for this cause, tho' without any reason, they put away the thoughts of it, as too trivial and obvious, and live as if it would never happen. But

With this pathetic description of the shortness and vanity, the sorrows and calamities of human life, that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards; the text contains likewise a declaration, that these miseries and troubles do not arise from chance

* Jam. 4. 14. Psal. 90. 9. † Job. 14. 1. 2.
Psal. 103. 15. 16.

chance or necessity, from blind fate, or unaccountable accidents; but from the wise disposition of the providence of God, which governs the world. *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* The only true and solid comfort that can support us under the troubles of life and against the fears of death; that can effectually enable us either to bear patiently the afflictions and troubles that will necessarily attend us here, or to be willing to depart hence, with any hopes of entering into another and better state hereafter; is to consider, that there is a God, a powerful and just, a wise and good being, that governs the world: by whose wisdom and goodness, all things are designed, by whose providence all things are conducted, to obtain the best ends; by whose power we were created, under whose care and government we are preserved and supported; in whose presence we continually are; in whom we live, move and have our being; without whom, not a sparrow falls to the ground, nor so much as a hair of our head can perish; without whose direction no evil can befall us, without whose permission no power can hurt us, and who is able to make all things work together for good, to them who love and fear him. This thought alone, that God governs the world, is a consideration sufficient to support us, under all the miseries and vanities of the world. For, tho' we could not discover, why he made us thus, nor the reason of his afflictions; the ways of his providence being inextricable, and his judgments unsearchable; yet any reasonable considerate mind, will think it prudent and safe to trust and rely upon infinite wisdom and goodness. That power, which in the frame of the natural world, has adjudged all things by weight and measure; that power which with exquisite art made every thing to conspire regularly and uniformly towards

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compleating the beautiful fabrick of the material universe ; that power then should surely in his government of the moral world, in his disposing of intelligent rational creatures, even tho' we could give no account of his ways, be believed by us to direct all things for the best, in order to bring about the noblest and most excellent ends : especially as in this dark state, our finite understandings are able to discern many wise and useful designs, in the severest and most difficult dispensations of his providence. We have therefore great reason to submit, not only with patience and resignation, but with joy and satisfaction, to his good pleasure ; firmly believing that all things will at the great day, when the whole counsel of God shall be more perfectly disclosed, appear to be most wise, good and gracious.

Did our afflictions come forth of the dust, and our troubles spring out of the ground ; were there no other cause to produce them, no other hand to direct them, no other power to overrule and remove them ; than the accidental concurrence of senseless atoms, than the fortuitous results of unguided matter and motion, than the blind effects of inevitable fate, or unintelligible chance ; then it would be certain, that there could be no rational comfort and support, to a considerate mind, under the various misfortunes and calamities of life. For what is the hope of unbelievers, when God, or as they say, fate or chance, taketh away their soul ? and on what ground can the confidence of an atheist rely ? his expectations at best are thin as a spider's web ; his hopes as the light chaff, which the wind scattereth from the face of the earth ; his prosperity and mirth can be but for a moment, and his adversity must of necessity end in despair. For what relief is to be expected from fate or chance ? how small a comfort is it, to know that death will soon
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put an end to all the miseries and calamities of life ; if our view be only bounded by that dark prospect, and there be no expectation beyond the grave ? And yet these are all the comforts that infidelity can afford, and all the hopes of him who is without God in the world. For tho' in prosperity such may say, *come on, let us enjoy the good things that are present* ; yet, in the days of sorrow, he will be convinced of his folly, and repent when it will be too late. His rejoicing will be turned into despair, his past pleasures will be remembered as a dream, and seem as a shadow that departeth. His present troubles will be insupportable ; and his fears of what possibly is to come, will be unmixed and without hope. The pretence of philosophy, of fortitude and firmness of spirit, of despising pain, and looking upon death, as only putting an end to our being, will appear meer empty delusion. And he only is capable of any true comfort and support, who being convinced that all things are directed by the all-wise government of the providence of God, doth by a life of piety and true holiness, finally secure to himself, the favour of that supreme disposer of all things.

The same appearances of nature, the same arguments of reason, which demonstrate the being and existence of God, do also prove his providence in governing the world, and his inspection and direction of all events ; so that even from the light of nature itself, which to all impartial persons gives sufficient evidence of the being and providence of God, it is manifest, that no affliction, no trouble of any kind, can possibly happen to us, without his permission. “ I am the Lord, and there is none else. — I am the light, and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil, (not *moral* but *natural* evil.) I the Lord do all these things †. The
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† Isai. 45. 6.

Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up again. Those things which to us seem the most casual and accidental, in respect of God, are really providential, and could not happen did not he, for wise reasons, permit them. And as they could not come to pass without his knowledge and permission, we may therefore be assured, that he intends them to serve some wise and good ends of providence, because he did not think fit to prevent them.

But since it seems implied and may be inferred from the text, that we may discover many just and good, wise and useful ends, for which God permits afflictions to fall upon men, and which ought to teach us patience and resignation to the divine will; it may be proper to consider for what reasons God should order things as they are, and why we ought to acquiesce in the divine good pleasure.

Let us then consider, that many of those things which we usually esteem among the troubles and afflictions of life, are such as must be resolved into the absolute sovereignty and dominion of God. Of this kind, are mortality and the shortness of human life; the unequal distribution of riches, honour and temporal things; the different capacities and abilities, the different tempers and constitutions, the different states and conditions of men in the world. For infinite power, wisdom and goodness, may display itself in producing what variety of creatures he pleases; and in communicating his free bounties in what measure and proportion he thinks fit, without giving any account of his ways. It is no just ground of complaint in men, that they were not created angels; any more than it is an injury to inferior creatures, that they are not endued with the capacities of men. We have all more reason to be thankful for what we have, than to be displeased for what we have not. It is sufficient, if in mat-

ters of rewards and punishments, God in the end deals equally with all his rational creatures; and disposes of each of them, according to the proportion of their several deserts in their respective stations. It was just, that the servant who gained four talents by the improvement of two, should be rewarded with four cities; and that the reward of ten cities should be allotted to him, who had improved five talents to ten. But why the one should be intrusted with five, and the other but with two; no other account can be given, than that it is *lawful for God to do what he pleases with his own.* Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour? not one person unconditionally to final happiness, and another to misery; “but as in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour *;” so hath not the master a right to employ his servants in what stations he pleases, more or less honourable? provided in his final distribution, he deals equitably with each of them, in their several and respective degrees.

The scripture as well as reason refers us to this sovereign power of God, in accounting for the unequal distribution of temporal and spiritual advantages. *He plucketh down one, and setteth up another; he maketh poor and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up.* He causeth one nation or people to be rich and powerful, and another to be poor and weak. He reveals himself to different people in a different manner. And in all this, there is neither reward nor punishment, but the various exercise of his wisdom and power over his creatures, without wrong or injury to them. God has an absolute right of acting by his sovereign power, and doing what he pleases with his own. And since all we en-

* 2 Tim. 2. 20.

joy proceeds wholly from God's free goodness and bounty; no man, whether he has received less or more, many or fewer advantages, has any just reason of complaint, or any ground to say unto his maker, *why hast thou made me thus?* inasmuch, as they who enjoy the fewest advantages, always receive more than they deserve, or can claim; and have no wrong or injury done them, by the abounding of God's free goodness to others. And this is the case, with respect to most of those things which we are apt to think are the greatest afflictions and calamities of life; when perhaps they are often no real and positive infliction of God's judgments but, merely the original differences of mens states and circumstances, the different talents committed to their charge, the different stations God has placed men in, for their various trials, by the exercise of a diversity of duties. Poverty has not always the nature of an affliction or judgment, but is rather a state of life appointed by God, for the proper trial and exercise of the virtues of contentment, patience and resignation. The same as to want of honour and power, want of children, weakness of body, shortness of life, and the like; nay and even of spiritual disadvantages; want of capacity and good understanding, want of knowledge and instruction, and of many opportunities and improvements which others enjoy. None of which are just ground of complaint against God, or any reason why we should not acquiesce in his divine good pleasure; since all these things are only different distributions of such free gifts as God not being obliged to bestow on any man, he may divide to every one in what measure and proportion he thinks fit.

But this we may depend upon, that in such measure only will God exact our duty, as he enables us to perform it; and that to whom little is given, of him shall not much be required. And
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this brings all the seeming inequality in the world to a real equality at last; so that he *which gathers much hath nothing over*; and he that gathers little has no lack. And we may, with St. Paul, say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" In all circumstances of life therefore, we are not to be uneasy, that God has made us inferior to others, or requires us to go thro' greater hardships, or has given us less abilities and fewer opportunities than others. But we are wholly to apply ourselves, with all resignation of mind, to the proper duties of that station, or those circumstances, where God has been pleased to place us. Poverty is not an argument to envy the rich; but a strong obligation to study the duties of humility, contentment and resignation. Ignorance and want of capacity, meanness of parts, and want of instruction, is not a reason to murmur that God has not intrusted us with more talents; but an admonition to take care, that we make a right improvement of those few that are given us. Weakness of body is not a just occasion to repine against God, for not giving us strength and health; but affords us a continual argument, to exercise and improve such virtues as are more peculiar to the mind. The consideration of the uncertainty and shortness of life ought not to make us spend our time in fruitless complaints of the vanity and meanness of our state; but to make us consider, that it is not of so much importance how long we live, but how well; for "honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that which is measured by numbers of years; but wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age." Again,

Let us consider, that a great part of the troubles of life, and the afflictions we complain of, are not

the immediate appointment of God, but the meer natural effects and consequences of our sins. This consideration alone ought to make us acquiesce with all humility and patience, under that burden which we, and not God, have brought upon us. For, why "should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" why, should he murmur against God, when he eateth but the fruit of his own ways, and is filled only with the natural consequences of his own devices; very unreasonably and unjustly this. For, if poverty be the effect of extravagancy, profuseness, and riotous living: if pain and diseases of body, be the effects of debauchery and intemperance; and the comforts of age, be prevented by the follies of youth: if anxiety and vexation of mind be the vanity of covetousness, of whom there is *no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches*; such troubles as these neither come forth of the dust, nor do they spring out of the ground, neither can they be complained of as proceeding from the hand of God; but they are the natural effects of mens own folly. "For they who plow wickedness shall reap iniquity; and they who sow iniquity shall reap vanity *." And yet even these afflictions may by a wise improvement, and by behaving discreetly under them, become the occasion of much religious advantage. These are a few of the many considerations, which ought to oblige us in all circumstances of life, readily to acquiesce in the good pleasure of God. There are others which are grounds of not only submission, but even thankfulness also to God for sending afflictions greatly to our advantage; such are those which are intended by him to teach us humility, to lead us to repentance, to wean us from the love of this world, to try and improve our faith, and to make

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* Hof. 10. 13. Prov. 22. 8.

eminent examples of patience and resignation, fortitude and contempt of the world.

One end which God proposes by afflictions, is to teach us humility, and a just sense of our own unworthiness. Tho' pride was not made for man, nor a haughty spirit for him that is born of a woman. Tho' nothing is more absurd and unnatural, than for dust and ashes to be lifted up against its maker; and for the thing formed to exalt itself against him that formed it. Tho' nothing can be more ridiculous and unreasonable, than for man, whose breath is in his nostrils, to despise and behave insolently towards his brother, who is of the same nature and dignity, and of like passion with himself; yet in fact so it is. For man often being in honour hath no understanding, and being puffed up with prosperity, considereth not whereof he is made, and remembreth not that he is but dust. Such is the weakness of our nature, "that when one is made rich, and the glory of his house is encreased, he is apt to forget, that when he dieth he shall carry nothing away with him, and that his glory shall not descend after him." When power is put into our hands we are extremely apt to make will succeed in the place of reason, and humour and passion instead of right. And the only proper preservative against, and effectual remedy for this evil, is that mixture of afflictions, which by the wise appointment of providence, brings men to a right sense of themselves, and their dependance upon God, and is therefore called the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Another end of God's sending afflictions and troubles upon men, is to lead us to repentance for our past errors. When a wicked man prospers in all his worldly affairs, and his designs are crowned with perpetual success; when he is surrounded with undisturbed plenty, and all his appetites are grati-

fied with the constant enjoyment of ease and pleasure; it is no wonder that he forgets God, and considers not, that for all these things he will call him into judgment. He is apt to put far from him the evil day, and say, to his soul, "take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." The greatest blessing and happiness that can befall such, the greatest instance of the mercy of God towards them, is the sending some great affliction, which like a severe medicine in a very dangerous distemper, may bring them to a right sense of themselves and their danger. The silent instruction of reason and true wisdom, the soft voice of God in the gentle admonitions of conscience, is not attended to by inconsiderate persons, in the hurry of passions, among a multitude of appetites, which have been constantly gratified. But when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, then the *inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness* *. Then men begin to consider what their state and condition is. Consideration is the foundation of repentance, the first motive and beginning of religion; and if afflictions have a proper tendency to convert wicked men, much more are they suited to convince good men of their failings, to make them sensible of their errors, and bring them to more consideration, to more perfect repentance and amendment. *David* confesses, "that it is good for me, that I have been afflicted; for before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." And afflictions are evidences of God's love and care. "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. And tho' "no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby †." We must therefore learn of pious *Job*, and say "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the
gave,

* *Isai.* 26. 9. † *Heb.* 12. 6. 11.

name of the Lord. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ? ”

Another end of God's sending afflictions and troubles, is to wean us from an over fond love of the present world. There is nothing that more hinders mens progress in religion, and cools the zeal even of well disposed persons, than a constant habitual enjoyment of the pleasures of life : O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions; that has nothing to vex him, but hath prosperity in all things *.” A long and uninterrupted prosperity is a perpetual danger and temptation. The Christian church; upon the emperors first becoming Christian, began to receive worldly encouragements, and then did contentions among Christians multiply, and the purity of their manners decrease. And it has been justly observed in our own nation, that true religion never had so much influence upon mens lives and manners, as when it was most in danger of being removed from us. For this reason God seldom makes his best servants most prosperous in this world. And yet afflictions have also their temptations to impatience, discontent, and complaining against God ; and prosperity, if well employed, may become an excellent virtue. For “ blessed is the rich, that is found without blemish, and hath not gone after gold.” Let us not then be solicitous after either state, but with all submission, leave that entirely to God ; who knows much better than we, what is most convenient for us.

To conclude : It is very wrong to imagine, that whoever is much afflicted must consequently be very wicked, and that God is angry with him. Indeed, when a man's conscience can apply his affliction to his own sins, it is just and reasonable he should

accept it as the punishment of sin, and as an argument to repentance; but he must by no means make another man's affliction an occasion of censuring his neighbour. For the scripture declares, "that happy is the man whom God correcteth; nay, blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." Let us therefore resign ourselves with all patience to the will of God, and rely upon him, with full trust and assurance, that he will finally direct all things to our best advantage. This was the practice of *David*, who when he was greatly distressed, encouraged himself in the Lord his God. And this was the resolution of the prophet, "tho' the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; tho' the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; tho' the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation *."

* Habbak. 3. 17.

DISCOURSE CXX. Abp. Tillotson.

Good men strangers and pilgrims on earth.

Heb. 11. 13.

And confessed, that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.

THE apostle having before declared, that faith is the great principle whereby good men are influenced and supported under all the evils and calamities of this life; in this chapter he more particularly represents to us, the force and power of faith; by which he means, a firm persuasion of things not present to sense, but future and invisible. *Faith* (saith he) “is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;” it represents to us the reality of things which are invisible, and distant from us; such as the existence of God and his providence, and a future state of rewards and punishments. He then goes on to give several instances, that the firm belief and persuasion of these things, was the great principle of the piety and virtue of the saints and pious men, in all ages of the world; by this *Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and others, obtained a good report, and pleased God, by all those eminent acts of obedience and self-denial, which are recorded of them. They believed the being of God, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. They dreaded his threatnings, -and relied on his promises of future and invisible good things. They lived and died in a full persuasion of the truth of*

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them, tho' they did not see them actually fulfilled and accomplished. They "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them." Tho' they did not see these promises made good in their days, yet they believed them, and heartily rejoiced in the hope and expectation of them; for "they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on earth *." The apostle, in this type, represents to us, the condition of good men, while passing thro' this world. They are "pilgrims and strangers on earth," travelling here for a time, as the patriarchs did in the land of *Canaan*, in expectation of a better condition in heaven.

From these words, I shall endeavour to represent our present condition in this world, and to excite in us a due sense and serious consideration thereof. The same condition that all the saints and holy men before us have been in. A condition very troublesome and unsettled, like that of pilgrims and strangers; so that every one of us may say with *David*, "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were †." This we must all acknowledge, if we truly estimate our present state. But tho' "they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth;" yet they were not without hope and expectation of a more happy condition in reversion. What bore up the patriarchs under all the evils and troubles of their pilgrimage, was an expectation of a future inheritance, a quiet and settled possession of that good land, which God had promised them. And good men do also expect, after the few and evil days of their pilgrimage in this world are expired, a blessed inheritance, in an heavenly country, and with *Abraham*, look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. It is frequent in scripture, and

* Heb. 11. 13. † Psal. 39. 12.

other authors to represent our condition in this world, by that of pilgrims and sojourners in a foreign country. For our immortal souls, which are our noblest and most excellent part, are natives of heaven, and but pilgrims and strangers on earth, and are to return to that heavenly country from whence they came. Thus *David*, "We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers †." So *St. Peter*, "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. And I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts." And *Plato* tells us, it was a common saying, that "the life of man is a kind of pilgrimage." Also *Tully*, "When I leave this world (says he) I look on myself as departing out of an inn, and not as quitting my own home and habitation; nature having assigned this world to us as a place to sojourn, but not to dwell in." This is agreeable to what the apostle said of the patriarchs "that they were pilgrims and strangers on earth;" and of all Christians, "here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Without following the metaphor too close, I shall only consider two things, which seem to be intended by the apostle; namely, that our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled. We being *strangers and pilgrims*. And that we are to live in expectation of a more happy condition, when we leave this world. *They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*; that they expected some more blest condition hereafter, when God's promise shall be fully made good.

That our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled, seems to be intended by the metaphor of strangers and pilgrims. And such was the life even of the patriarchs; they had no constant, fixed abode and habitation, but were con-

tinually wandering about, and in their travels were exposed to many hazards, dangers, afflictions, and miseries. Such also is our condition here; often troublesome, always uncertain and unsettled. Not to insist on the weak and helpless condition of infancy; how helpless and insufficient that state is for its own preservation, and to answer its natural wants and necessities. Nor yet the dangerous vanity and desperate folly of youth; or the infirmities and contempts, the tedious and wearisome days and nights, with which old age is afflicted, so as to render life not only unpleasant, but almost an intolerable burden. Not to dwell on these, which yet possess a great share and portion of our lives; if we consider man in his best state, we shall find him to be *altogether vanity*. We need not travel into remote countries, to make life more troublesome and uneasy. Wherever we are, whether at home in our native country, or abroad, we shall there find trouble and inconvenience enough to convince us, that we are but strangers in it. Good men more peculiarly are liable to many evils and sufferings, on account of their virtue and piety. And because "they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them," and takes all occasions to torment them, either by doing or speaking evil of them. Besides these, there are abundance of common and natural inconveniencies, to render human life uneasy. For we must either live alone, or in company. But how few can tolerably enjoy themselves alone, for any considerable time? for tho' self-love is a prevailing principle, yet scarce any care to converse with themselves. And if we try the conversation of men, it must daily grieve us, to see the censoriousness, uncharitableness, and insincerity of one towards another; how kind to the face, how detracting behind the back! and this one reigning vice is enough to make an honest, sincere, upright man,
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to be sick of the world, and glad to steal off a stage, where all is personated, nothing true and natural; where the conversation of most men is insidious and designing, full of flattery and falsehood, of good words and ill offices: where "one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth †" there are numbers who lie in wait to deceive. And when a man hath done all the good he can, endeavouring to oblige every one, to live inoffensively, and also exemplarily; he thinks himself well off, if he escapes censure for doing good, and obtains a pardon for what truly deserves praise. But these melancholy considerations aside; when we are in the health and vigour of our age, when the humours of our body are not soured by great disappointments and losses, by the death of friends and relations, or other cross events and sad accidents; yet we are continually liable to all these. And the perpetual fear and apprehension of them is no small uneasiness to our minds, and in a great measure robs us of the comfort, pleasure and sweetness of all our enjoyments. Sometimes the evils we fear overtake us, and as one affliction and trouble goes off, another succeeds.

If we have a plentiful fortune, we are apt to abuse it to intemperance and luxury, which naturally produce pains and diseases, and this takes away the comfort and enjoyment of a great estate. If we have health, then perhaps we are afflicted with losses, deprived of friends, crossed in our interests and designs, or something happens to impede or interrupt the contentment and happiness of our lives. It may be an unexpected storm, a sudden calamity, in an instant sweeps away, what with great care and industry we have been years saving up. Or, if our estate remains, our children are taken away, to whose comfort and advantage, the pains and en-

deavours of our whole lives were devoted. But should none of these happen, which is scarce possible, yet to convince us that a perfect state of happiness is not to be expected here, we find by experience, that those who enjoy the greatest accommodations of life, are yet as far from true happiness, as those who are most destitute of what is esteemed the greatest felicity of this world. It often happens that they who have at command and in their power all the requisites and ingredients of a worldly felicity, yet have not skill and ability to frame from thence a happy condition of life to themselves. For tho' some have health, friends, reputation, estate, and all outward accommodations that heart can wish; yet in the midst of such blest circumstances, they are uneasy in their minds; *in their sufficiency they are in straits*. They are surfeited with happiness itself; and even nauseate their good condition; tho' they want nothing to make them happy, but the thought of being so. They can be as much troubled, without having any thing to disturb them, as those who have the real causes of discontent; which plainly shews that happiness is not to be found in this life, but *all is vanity and vexation of spirit*.

And whatever happiness we are capable of enjoying here, is attended with great uncertainty; short at the longest, and every moment in danger of being lost. We have no security that any earthly felicity shall be continued to us. There is nothing here, but we may be deprived of by a thousand accidents; or, we must die, and in *that day* all our worldly hopes and enjoyments will perish. Here we have no abiding place, *no continuing city*; it is therefore vain to expect happiness in a world that we are only to travel and pass thro', not to stay in. Thus we see that our condition here is very troublesome and unsettled.

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And this world's being a state of pilgrimage, also implies a tendency to future settlement; an expectation of a more happy condition hereafter. For so the apostle reasons, "They confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on earth; for they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country;" that is, they who acknowledge themselves to be *pilgrims and strangers on earth*, and yet profess to be persuaded of the goodness of God and the fidelity of his promise, do "plainly declare that they seek another country." This is spoken of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. There are many considerations apt to persuade good men of a future state; as, that mankind is generally possessed with this hope and persuasion; that the more wise and virtuous men have been, the more clearly have they apprehended the hopes of immortality, and the more contentedly resigned themselves to death, as having a larger prospect of future happiness; that God hath appointed our condition here to be troublesome and unsettled, on purpose to make us seek elsewhere for happiness, to elevate and raise our minds to the hopes and expectations of a condition better and more durable than what this world affords; and which, considering the goodness of God, his gracious providence, and care of good men, is a thing of itself extremely credible. And if this is our condition in the world; if we are *pilgrims and strangers on earth*, and look for a better, heavenly country; this ought to have a great influence on us in many respects.

Let us then entangle and incumber ourselves as little as possible in this our pilgrimage; let us not too far engage our affections in the pleasures and advantages of this world, because we are only to pass thro' and not to stay in it. Let us "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against

against the soul *.” The gratifying our inordinate lusts, and our carnal and sensual inclinations, is directly opposite to the nature of our immortal spirits, to their great design and business in this world. Fleshly lusts pollute and defile us, they sink our affections into the vanities and follies of this life, and unfit us for that pure, spiritual and divine life, which can alone qualify us for our heavenly country and inheritance. And therefore while our souls sojourn here, we should abstain from, and be unspotted by them, as being perfectly contrary to the laws and manners of our heavenly country. If in passing thro’ this world, we wallow in brutish and fleshly lusts, our native country, when our souls think to return thither, will reject and cast us out. When we knock at heaven’s gate, expecting to be admitted, and shall cry, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*; he will bid us *depart from him*, because we have been *workers of iniquity*. Nothing that is unclean can enter into heaven. He who is to receive us into those blessed mansions, hath absolutely declared, that *without holiness none shall see the Lord*. If then we hope to see God in that happy, blissful state, “we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God;” that we may become capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of him forever. And as for the advantages of this world, let us not pursue them too eagerly. We may use the conveniencies which fairly offer themselves, and should be content to want what we cannot honestly acquire; remembering that as we are travellers, a little will serve to accommodate us, in our passage and pilgrimage. Why should we covet more, or trouble ourselves for what is not necessary on our journey, especially by any unjust methods? If the providence of God offers them to us, by the use of honest diligence and

* 1 Pet. 2. 11.

and lawful means, we are not to refuse them; but then we should not set our hearts on them, nor suffer our affections to be entangled by them. We should act like those who traffick in foreign parts, consign our estates into our own native country, send our treasure before us into the other world, to receive the benefit of them when we come there. And this we may do by alms and charity. What we spend on the flesh, we must leave behind us, for it will not serve us in our own country; but what we lay out for the relief of the poor, is treasure laid up for ourselves against another day. *Giving of alms is providing for ourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that fadeth not away* *.

If we are *pilgrims and strangers* here, it concerns us to behave with great caution, and to lead blameless, inoffensive lives; remembering, that those whom we sojourn with, are curious and narrow observers of our manners and carriage. Travellers never take that liberty and freedom, which the natives of the place do, but are perpetually on their guard, knowing how strictly they are observed, and how little beloved, as being strangers. Christians then must be *harmless and blameless*, as it becomes the *sons of God to be, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom we should shine as lights*. Since we live among strangers and enemies, we should be careful to bring no scandal on our holy profession; and therefore should be kind to one another, and to have no disputes among ourselves. And yet how shamefully do Christians quarrel with each other, as if they were not related, nor ever expected to meet at last in the same country, there to live together forever.

Let us be also patient and chearful as we can, under all our troubles and afflictions. Those who
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travel in strange countries, must expect to encounter with many injuries and affronts, great difficulties and hardships. Such as are tolerable we must bear with cheerfulness. Many of the lesser inconveniencies of human life should be made matter of mirth and diversion, not of melancholy and serious trouble. But there are some evils and calamities of human life so heavy as to require a high degree of patience to support us under; and enable us to bear them decently. Such as the loss of estates, friends, and dearest relations. These are some of the greatest afflictions of this life, and hardest to be borne. For let men pretend what they will to philosophy and contempt of the world, and its perishing enjoyments; yet after all, nature hath framed, and planted in us strong inclinations and affections to ourselves and children, friends and relations; and which as naturally affect our hearts, as extreme hunger and thirst can our stomachs. Whoever therefore pretends to have a mighty affection for any thing, and yet at the same time, can, without any great sense of pain, contentedly bear the loss of it, does not act like a philosopher, but an hypocrite, and under a pretence of being wise, is in truth an ill natured man; for most certainly in proportion to our love of any thing, will be our trouble and grief for its loss. So that under such great and heavy strokes, we ought to have both faith and patience. And indeed, nothing but the firm belief of an *heavenly life*, a blessed immortality in another world, is sufficient to support a man in the *few and evil days of his pilgrimage*; and to sustain his spirits under the great evils and calamities of this life. And if we bear these afflictions patiently, and with a due submission to the will of God, it will certainly encrease our happiness in the other world, and “work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Again,

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The consideration of our present uncertain condition and future hopes, should set us above the fondness of life, and the slavish fears of death. This world at the best affords us but little satisfaction, and he is the wisest man, that expresses towards it, an indifferent mind and affection; who is always willing to leave it, and yet is patient to stay in it, as long as God pleases. As for death, tho' the dread of it be natural, yet why should its terrors surprize and amaze us, when we consider, that to a good and pious soul, it is no other than the gate of heaven, an entrance into life eternal. Considering the numerous calamities to which we are liable in a long pilgrimage, there are only three things that can make our present condition here in any measure tolerable to a wise man: Namely, that God governs the world; that we are not always to stay in it; that there is a happiness reserved for us in another place, to recompense and make us amends for all the troubles and sufferings of this life. And yet, alas, how do all covet life? old age will catch at every twig, to live a little longer; tho' there is no more pleasure to be enjoyed, no more satisfaction to be expected and hoped for; nay, the best of us, after saying with *David*, *I am a stranger and sojourner with thee, as all my fathers were*, are still apt with him to importune God for longer life; *O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more seen.* And when God hath granted this request, we would then be spared, yet a little longer.

But let us remember, that as God did not design us to continue always in this world; therefore he made it so uneasy, that we might be the more willing to leave it. Indeed, so long as we remain here, we are detained from our happiness; for "while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord." This consideration made *St. Paul*

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so desirous “to be dissolved, that he might have a much better habitation *.” This made him so full of joy, when about to leave this world. Nay, this consideration, tho’ but obscurely apprehended, raised the spirits of the wiser and better heathens, and filled them with joy and comfort at the thoughts of their dissolution. With what constancy and evenness of mind did *Socrates* receive the sentence of death? Who can read *Cato’s* discourse concerning his death, without being most sensible affected; “I am (says he) transported with a desire of seeing my forefathers, those excellent persons, of whom I have heard, read, and written; and now I am going to them, I should not willingly be drawn back again into this world. If some God would offer me at this age, to be a child again, and to cry in the cradle, I would earnestly refuse it, and on no terms accept of it. — For what advantage is there in life, or rather, what labour and trouble is there not in it †?” And if a heathen, who had only some obscure glimmerings of another life, and the blessed state of departed souls, could speak thus chearfully of death; how much more should we, to whom *life and immortality are revealed and brought to light by the gospel?*

And we should always prefer our duty and a good conscience to all the world; because our souls being immortal, are infinitely more valuable. “For what is a man profitted, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” When we are tempted by temporal interests and advantages, or by the fear of present loss and sufferings, to deny our religion, or act contrary to our duty and conscience, let us ask ourselves, what the profit and advantage will be? What! if for fear of men, I incur the wrath and displeasure of almighty God? whose

* 2 Tim. 4. 6. † Tully Senect.

whose frowns are more terrible than the bitterest wrath, and most cruel malice of men, and therefore to be more infinitely dreaded? What! if to preserve this frail, mortal body, I hazard the loss of my immortal soul; to escape a temporal inconvenience, I forfeit everlasting happiness, and plunge myself into eternal misery? would it not be a mad exchange, for any temporal gain and advantage, to lose the things that are eternal? for the pleasing ourselves a little while, to become miserable forever? If then we are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and are truly persuaded of God's promises as to an heavenly country, where we hope to arrive after the few and evil days of our pilgrimage are expired; let us not, by complying with the vicious customs and practices of an evil world, frustrate our hope, and banish ourselves from the happy place to which we are going. We pretend to be travelling towards heaven, but if we *make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*, we destroy our hopes of arriving there. We do not live as if we expected a future happiness, except the unseen glories of another life raise us above the temptations of sense. Our faith and hope have not their proper influence on us, if they do not govern our lives and actions, and make us steadfast in the profession of our holy religion, and in the conscientious practice of it.

Lastly, as sojourners and travellers in this world, we should often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlasting happiness, and the direct way thereto, is by a constant, sincere and universal obedience to the laws and commandments of God. A way so plain, that a sincere and honest man can never err. Therefore we must not suffer ourselves to be led out of it, on any pretence whatever. If we will *enter into life*, we must *keep the commandments*. Would we always have our end in our eye, it will serve to direct us in
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our way, and quicken our pace. There being no more powerful motives to a good life, than to be assured, that if we *have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life.*

DISCOURSE CXXI. *Stanhope.*

The happiness of those who die in the Lord.

Rev. 14. 13.

I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write; blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.

THE solemn manner in which these words are delivered, plainly discovers the great importance of them; and they are expressly commanded to be carefully preserved in writing. “I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write; blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” To which is farther added, the testimony of the Holy Ghost, confirming the truth of what was dictated by that voice, and particularly declaring wherein the blessedness of such persons consists; “yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” Such preparatory forms always imply, that the subsequent matter is of mighty consequence; and in
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this place, it is with a view more powerfully to awaken our minds, and recommend it to our best and most attentive consideration.

The immediate occasion and design of this passage, was to fortify the Christians against some violent persecutions, that St. *John* foresaw were then approaching ; or, as others think, he describes the blessedness of those faithful professors of Christianity, whom the grace of God should enable to persevere unto the end, and to suffer martyrdom for the doctrines of the gospel. Such persons being sometimes said with a peculiar emphasis, *to die in the Lord*, who lay down their lives for his sake. But there is no necessity, nor indeed any just reason, of confining this expression only to times of primitive persecution, or to the martyrs who then suffered. For, as every sincere, good man, who heartily embraces the faith of Christ, and who lives as becomes that faith, is said, at his death, to *die in the Lord* ; so every one who continues in that belief and obedience to the end of his days, may properly be said, when God takes him out of the world, to *sleep in Jesus, and die in the Lord* *. In treating on these words, I shall endeavour to represent the happy state of good men after death ; and then draw some useful inferences for the conduct of our lives.

To represent the happy state of good men after death, is what we can only endeavour at ; for who can justly do it ? what tongue of men or angels can find expressions strong and significant enough for the purpose ? What images are so bright, so glorious ? What understandings so large and capacious as to form an adequate idea of that bliss, to which nothing in this life is equal, nothing like or comparable to it ? That bliss, which would lose much of its perfection, if our finite understandings could fully com-

* 1 Thes. 4. 14.

comprehend it; and whose peculiar excellence it is, "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him *." The utmost we must expect, is to have it drawn in such proportions, as frail men are capable of; by resemblances taken from things familiar to us; and by such considerations as are of most weight, in the affairs and transactions of human life. This is the method the holy spirit hath here made use of. The main arguments by which he raises our esteem for that blessedness pronounced from heaven, *upon the dead which die in the Lord*, seem to be these; the troubles such men are delivered from; *they rest from their labours*. The good acceptance and great reward, which they shall receive after death, for what they have done well in this life; *Their works shall follow them*. The time when they enter upon this happiness intimated in these words, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth*.

They who die in the Lord are blessed, in regard of the troubles they are delivered from. "They rest from their labours." I need not undertake to shew upon this occasion, how sore and manifold these labours are; for this is an argument which all of us feel and experience. We all know how we are surrounded with troubles and afflictions on every side; in our bodies, in our souls, in our public and private capacities. The vanities of youth and the infirmities of age; the difficulties of supporting our bodies, thro' the perpetual wants and weaknesses to which they are subject; the lingering and acute distempers, the sensible decays, and more sensible pains, that waste and torment them. The miseries of an unhappy temper, and overflowings of a disordered blood, which intercept all

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* 1 Cor. 2. 9.

light and comfort, and condemn the soul to the dark dismal prison, of a melancholy constitution; the violence of passions from within, and the amazing variety of accidents from without, continually provoking us to grief, anger, or some other excess; all these are the subjects of our complaints, and to which most of us are naturally liable.

The losses in our estates, the surprizing disappointments in our expectations and designs, the hurry of business, the strife and contention in which our affairs engage us; the travel of the poor, and the cares of the rich; the anguish of our afflicted, and the uncertainty of our prosperous condition; the treachery of pretended friends, and the malice of professed enemies; the snares of conversation, the vanity and extreme danger even of those diversions and pleasures, by which we endeavour to lighten this load of life, and gain some intervals of ease at least, by forgetting for a little while our cares and calamities. These, and innumerable many other difficulties, are inseparable incumbrances on mortality to every one, considered apart from his relations and engagements in society. And as those capacities increase, so do our sorrows and labours with them. The care of families, and kind concern for those whom nature has made part of ourselves; the fears and anxious thoughts for their safety; the fellow-feeling of their sufferings; the restless endeavours to help them in their distresses, and the uneasy regret we endure, when we would assist them, but cannot; or, when they would not suffer us to do them the good we could; and the having those friends taken from us, whom nature, or kindness, or their own worth, have rendered very dear and necessary. The tearing as it were our hearts asunder, by cutting off that tenderest part of them, whom God and affection had incorporated and made one with us. These
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are trials which we have so quick and piercing a sense of, that it is much less difficult to lament and complain of them as they deserve, than to temper our resentments, and keep them within the bounds of duty, decency, and Christian moderation. — A more moving spectacle, may yet be given by opening the prospect a little wider; and urging the uneasiness we feel from the distress of the needy, the injuries of the oppressed, the cries of helpless widows and orphans; the corruptions, the calamitous circumstances of the state or church whereof we are members; all which affect us more sensibly, in proportion as we are better natured men, and better Christians. But the most afflicting consideration of all is, that these things not only create a present uneasiness, but may, if not carefully managed, lay the foundation of eternal misery. That they are the temptations and instruments of sin, such as the frailty of human nature cannot easily resist; such as are often successful even over the most watchful and resolute; and therefore of all afflictions, the wise and good man esteems those the heaviest, which hazard the salvation of his soul.

These are all of them such labours, as the condition we now live in naturally exposes every man to; and such as God does not exempt the holiest and best beloved of his servants from. They, like their captain, are made perfect thro' hardships and sufferings. These are their spiritual warfare, the exercise of their virtue, the proof of their patience, fidelity, and constant love to him. God seems not very exact in the measures of good and evil in this world. Because this state is not the season of final retribution; but he hath appointed another life, wherein he will make ample amends, for all we do and suffer here. The benefits we may at present expect, are the wisdom and kindness of his providence, to turn every affliction to our good; the power

powerful assistances of his grace, to support us under our conflicts; and the merciful hope of his promise, that after we have toiled and suffered a while he will translate us to a state of rest and peace, and render that death, which to meer nature is so horrible, a blessing and privilege; as in truth it is to those who *die in the Lord*. For, ought not this to be a supporting consideration, in the midst of difficulties and troubles, that tho' these every way surround us, yet there is a day coming, when we shall be free from them; that God will hide us in the grave, and set us on that shore, where we shall safely look back upon this tempestuous world, free from the storms that tossed us here, and to have only the remembrance of them. A remembrance the more joyful, as our former miseries were the more grievous. And it must afford a mighty comfort, to think that we shall shortly put off this load of infirmities; that we shall be perfectly free from all the disturbances, which the lustings of the flesh against the spirit, and the irreconcilable war in our members, daily create to us. That God will place us where the enemy of souls cannot hurt us, nor temptation assault us, nor corrupt nature betray us, nor pain, affliction or danger overtake us. Surely *man, who is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards*, hath reason to be pleased with such a refuge as this; especially when "God shall also wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.*" So valuable a blessing is it, meerly to rest from our labours; so proper this argument to reconcile us to death, that it removes us to a place of ease and safety. But if this makes death tolerable, there is something besides, that makes it even desirable. For

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Blessed

* Job. 21. 4.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, because they not only *rest from their labours*, but *their works follow them*. The toil, drudgery, and whatever was grievous to them, is put off with that body, which exposed them to corruption and suffering. But their labours are not forgotten, their diligence and conscientious care, the meekness and resignation wherewith they were endued, still remain; and as to all the desirable and advantageous purposes, they will abide with them forever in the other world. For by *their works following them*, is meant, that good acceptance and great reward, which the saints shall surely find after death, for their good deeds in this life. But we must not from this, and such other expressions in scripture, infer such merit and sufficiency in the best of our works, as if we could thereby demand this happiness due to us as of right. For, “all have come short of the glory of God”, and no flesh can be justified in his sight,” should judgment and not mercy, be the standard of his proceedings. But the meaning is, that according to the terms of the gospel covenant, which for the sake and sufferings of Christ, promiseth pardon for sins repented of, compassion for infirmities not indulged, and a recompence for those good actions, which by God’s grace we have performed, every sincere Christian shall not fail to be abundantly considered, in proportion to what he hath done and suffered. Such will be more or less rewarded, according to the trials and instances of every man’s virtue; and in such manner and measure as far exceeds the value of his best works, and the degree of his sharpest afflictions. For we are assured, that || “the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory, that shall be revealed in us. And that, “these light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a

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* Rom. 3. 23. || Rom. 8. 18. 2 Cor. 4. 17.

more exceeding weight of glory." God will deal with such men, according to the riches of his own infinite mercies; and make them happy, far beyond what we can conceive.

In this imperfect state of things, we can have no distinct notions of that future and vastly different state, when this dross of earth and sensual appetites shall be purified; when the faculties of our minds shall be enlarged, freed from prejudice and error; and not as now *darkly and thro' a glass*; but to know *even as also we are known* *. We now "speak as children, we think as children, we understand as children;" but when we come to the fulness of the *stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus*, we shall have very different apprehensions of those things. Then we shall see, know, and feel, that all those lofty descriptions of heavenly joys in scripture, which now so hardly gain our belief, are much below the happiness they would represent. O the incomprehensible excellence of that knowledge, which shall see God as he is! O the delights of that wonder and praise, and perpetual thanksgiving, with which glorified saints extol the amazing wisdom, justice and goodness of God! The mighty satisfaction of being let into the hidden treasures of his mercy, the exact harmony of his providence, the mysteries of his nature, and his dealings with mankind! O the perfect purity and tranquility of a life free from lust and passion, from doubtful and painful struggles, ever chusing, ever delighting, in that which is good! O the charms of that entire love and peace, and joint consent, in honouring and serving God, and rejoicing in each others happiness; void of that envy, jealousy, and discord, that ill-nature, self interest, and different opinions, which will not permit us to enjoy a perfect unity in this world! O gracious God, "how plentiful is thy

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* 1 Cor. 13. 12.

thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ! That thou shouldst reward their short and imperfect obedience, with so great a recompence ! they are *unprofitable servants*, and yet thou makest them sit down at thy table in the kingdom of heaven. Their sins and frailties are many ; and yet those are remembered no more ; their good deeds in comparison are but few, and yet none of *these* are forgotten ! Their present labours and sufferings have their intervals and comforts, and are light and short ; in comparison of that future weight of glory, that eternity of interrupted bliss, which they work out for them. Nor are these labourers put off with distant prospects and uneasy expectations ; for no sooner does night come on, when they can work no longer, but they are called to present payment. The combat once ended, and the race run, the conqueror is crowned without delay. This brings me to consider the blessedness of good men departed hence.

And that is at the time, when they enter upon their happiness. *Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord from henceforth.* Without criticising on these words, it will be sufficient to observe, that both the sense in which I have all along taken them, and also of our church in using them at the burial of every Christian, do warrant us to conclude that this rest from labour, and the reward of good works, begin at the instant of mens *dying in the Lord*. The labourers in the vineyard, as soon as the even was come, and the duty of the day over, are called to receive their wages ||. *Lazarus* immediately upon his death, was “ carried by angels into *Abraham's* bosom, and comforted for the evil things he received in his life-time *.” *St. Paul*, mentioning his departure, and reflecting upon the *good fight* he had fought, declares, “ that from thenceforth there

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was laid up for him a crown of righteousness *". most probably indeed, this crown is not yet so bright, nor the happiness of *Lazarus* so exquisite as it will be, at the last great day of accounts, when the righteous judge shall appear. But still that crown was determined and fixed from the day of the apostles departure; and *Lazarus* was at least in a condition of *comfort*; such as made him good amends for the poverty and diseases he had undergone in his body. So that these passages plainly confute that fond imagination, which some have entertained, of the soul's sleeping in a state of insensibility till the general resurrection. They also disprove that profitable doctrine of the *romish* purgatory, and render prayers for the dead, superfluous and useless. For what need have those dead for our prayers, whom the text pronounces from *thenceforth blessed*? Or, how can they be said to *rest from their labours*, who pass from henceforth into a state of torments, more exquisite by far, than this life can possibly endure? And yet such is the popish purgatory represented. So just ground then have we to conclude, that there is no interval, between the end of good mens labours, and the beginning of their rest; so substantial a reason is it of their happiness, that their works do not only follow them, but go with them, and render the dead *blessed*, from the very moment of their *dying in the Lord*. I shall now draw a few inferences from what has been observed.

And we shall do well seriously to consider, what vast encouragement these words contain, to recommend a godly life. For we must remember, that the glorious privileges we have been treating of, do not belong to all, but only to such as *die in the Lord*. To those who embrace the faith of Christ and live up to the principles of the gospel, persevering

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* 2 Tim. 4. 6. 8.

vering therein, to the end of their days. But they who refuse and oppose this belief, or who *hold it in unrighteousness*, their case is the reverse of what I have described. They are so far from finding rest after their labours, that all the evils they sustain in this world, are light and less than nothing, in comparison of the intolerable, the inconceivable, the infinitely heavier miseries, reserved for them in the next. Their *works follow them* too; but it is to upbraid them with their guilt and impenitence, to wound them with sad and fruitless remorse; to testify against them in the great day of account, and to condemn them to everlasting flames. Let me then most earnestly conjure, let me prevail with all that hear me, immediately to secure a title to this blessedness, by breaking off their iniquities from this very moment. This will best be done, by possessing our minds with just and worthy notions of the happiness promised in the text; by considering what vast amends will be made them for all their hardships of virtue here. And how wretched an exchange will these men make, who indulge the pleasures of sin for a season, at the vast expence, the certain and irrecoverable loss of their souls and eternal happiness hereafter? The severest doctrines of the gospel are fully sufficient, to enforce their practice, would we but impartially consider them; and proceed upon the same measures which human prudence puts us upon, in the affairs of this world. And, alas! what are the affairs of this world, when compared to our spiritual concerns? what are the troubled and imperfect joys of sense, which cares and fears, pains and disasters innumerable, disturb; in comparison of that sweet and sure repose above, which nothing can annoy? What are the honours, the wealth, the pomp, we here so eagerly pursue, if set against the glories of saints, and the inestimable treasures of our heavenly Father's kingdom?

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Nothing turns to true account, but piety and virtue. No gains are durable but these. They are profitable for all things; so exceeding profitable, beyond our hopes or imaginations, that had not God the giver of them, assured us of this, we could not have been so easy as to believe, nor so presumptuous as to expect it.

The considerations before observed, are also very proper to arm our minds against the fear of death. A passion, where it prevails to any great degree, is the most tyrannical and tormenting. Because, it is perpetually terrifying us with danger, which, with all our industry, we cannot possibly shun. And nothing but Christianity can conquer this domineering evil. But when we consider, how many things there are to abate our fondness for this life; and that they who *die in the Lord*, are effectually delivered from all these; when we look upon death, as a necessary passage to happiness, and reflect that the instant we cease to be miserable here, we shall take possession of a never failing bliss in another state; this makes it very different from what it is to the wicked or natural man. *The sting of death is sin*, that is, the only thing which renders dying terrible, is the being called to an account for our evil deeds. But the gospel frees us from the bondage of this fear. It shews us a victorious redeemer. One who hath satisfied for the sins of mankind, and thereby triumphed over death. Nay, he hath made it a blessing to them *that die in him*. And this we may all do by the assistance of his grace, if we diligently seek and use it. So that this fear is an affliction in our power to correct and moderate, at least we may conquer it as Christians, tho' we cannot wholly remove it as men. For the better we are provided for the approach of death, the less troublesome will the apprehensions of it be. And a firm prospect of our future blessedness, should make us long for that very dissolution, which

now we start and tremble at, and take such vast pains to avoid. Again,

These considerations afford us the only powerful argument to support us under all the injuries and afflictions of this world. To think, that these things cannot last long, is some, but not a sufficient consolation. But to be assured that they will turn to our incomparably greater advantage, such as bears no proportion to the utmost we can endure here; this is a substantial stay to our spirits. To reflect, that he who afflicts us, does it for our good, and out of fatherly tenderness; that what we complain of, is the exercise of our virtue, and every fleshly trial a higher step to perfection; that not one sigh or groan vanishes into air, but reaches the ears of the Almighty; not one tear falls to the ground, but all, as *David* says, are put into his bottle; not one injury or affront we ever forgave, but it hath gained us the forgiveness of our infinitely more heinous offences against God; not one pang or sickness we have patiently gone thro' and with Christian resignation, but it will be repaid with interest in perfect joy. These are the invincible weapons of a good man, such as render him proof against all the assaults of ill men, and what we call ill fortune. And with the assistance of these, he will find his courage keep up with his faith, and be able to *withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.*

Lastly, what has been observed, ought to prevent or check those sallies of excessive grief, which we too often indulge ourselves in, when it pleases God to remove good men, especially our relations and friends out of this world. For those who give a loose to such passions, do not rightly consider, when they profess this concern for such persons. For why are we sorry for them? Is it an insupportable calamity to us, that they whom we most dearly loved,
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are after many painful struggles, at last delivered from misfortunes and diseases, from hazards and dangers, from sorrow and sin? Do we use to weep and lament when our best friends escape many a terrible storm, and come safe to port? And yet this is the case of our friends, *who die in the Lord*. And is the being sorry for their happiness, an argument of our love? this is most absurd. Our refusing to be comforted in such cases, proceeds from not considering how happy they really are; or else it is out of kindness for ourselves, and not for them. We ought then to be content, that an useful neighbour, a darling child, or a tender husband, should be removed to future blessings, tho' we must not here longer enjoy their company. And the better the person is that is taken from us, the more assured hope have we of his obtaining that better life; and this is a powerful argument to resign ourselves to these severe and afflicting tryals. And therefore it well becomes us, to exhort the surviving relations of the deceased, to dry up their tears; and from the dark side of such instances of afflicting providence, to turn themselves rather to the bright prospect of his happy change.

What remains then is, for us, to endeavour to copy after such good examples, as are the most excellent; that when we are called upon, as shortly we shall, we may with holy trust, and steady submission to God's will, commit ourselves into the hands of our most merciful creator and redeemer. Let us imitate the commendable actions, resemble the meek temper and good disposition of departing pious Christians, that so we may in God's due time, meet our dearest friends and relations again, at a joyful and blessed resurrection. Even then, when all those *who have died in the Lord*, "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; when these

these vile bodies of ours, shall be fashioned after Christ's glorious body, to live and reign with him for ever and ever.

DISCOURSE CXXII. *Abp. Tillotson.*

The usefulness of considering our latter end.

Psalms 90. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THE *Chaldee* paraphrase calls the 90th psalm "The prayer which *Moses*, the prophet of the Lord, prayed, when the people of the house of *Israel* sinned in the wilderness;" and which contains a devout meditation on the shortness and frailty of human life. To be assured that our life shall not exceed a certain term, as was the case of the *Israelites* in the wilderness, is an awaking thing, and commonly more rouzes men, than the general consideration of our own frailty and mortality. And yet to a wise, considerate man, it ought in reason to be the same. For that which will certainly be, ought to be thought on and provided for; whether it be at some distance, or the next moment, we should always be in a readiness, for fear of a surprise. This prayer then, is as proper for us, as it was for *Moses* and the *Israelites*, tho' we are not in the very same circumstances. They were under a per-

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peremptory sentence of death within *forty years*, but might be sooner taken away; which is not much different from our case. For we are liable to death every day, nay, every moment of time. So that it is as fit for us to pray, as it was for *Moses* and the *Israelites*, that God would “*teach us so to number our days,*” so to remember the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, and so to consider our latter end, “that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;” That we may manage and conduct this frail, short, and uncertain life, in the best manner and to the wisest purposes. I shall at present endeavour to shew by several particulars, what influence and effect the serious consideration of our latter end, and the shortness and uncertainty of this present life, ought in reason to have upon us.

And the meditation of our latter end should make us duly consider our nature and its duration. It is true wisdom to understand ourselves, and the nature of our beings, of what we consist, and for what duration we are designed.— Whether we shall *die like beasts*; or whether there is an *immortal spirit within us*; which hath no dependance on matter, the bodily and visible part of ourselves, but is a much better and more enduring substance; which hath in it no principle of corruption, but shall survive these perishing bodies, and when they are mouldered into dust, shall subsist in a happy or miserable condition, according as we have behaved in this world. These are two very different schemes of things, which ought to affect and inspire us with different sentiments and resolutions, and to put us on a quite contrary method and conduct of our lives. For if we are certain, that we shall be utterly extinguished by death, like the beasts that perish, then we have nothing to take care of but our bodies; then we need not extend our thoughts, hopes or fears, beyond this present life; having nothing to

do but to please ourselves with present enjoyments, and so to live as may best promote our temporal quiet, satisfaction, and security. But then we should well consider, whether these things are really so, and may be depended on? Whether these principles will not fail us when we most need their comfort and support? and when death approaches, will not vanish and disappear? To be well assured of this, is of infinite consequence to us, because thereon depends our happiness or misery to all eternity. Therefore nothing less than the demonstration of the impossibility of our having immortal spirits, that shall survive our bodies, and be extremely happy or miserable in another world, should be satisfactory to us, in a case so dangerous, and on which so much depends. For if there is a possibility of our having immortal souls, that shall live forever hereafter, nothing can acquit us from the greatest imprudence, if we neglect to provide for that best part of ourselves, which is of eternal duration. And if the supposition of the soul's immortality, is infinitely most probable, as best agreeing with the notions which all men have of God and his providence; with the natural desires, hopes, and fears of mankind; and as most suitable to the capacities, expectations, and general sentiments of wise men in all ages; then it is infinitely more safe and wise, to proceed on this supposition, and to act agreeably thereto. So that if we have immortal souls, which shall live and continue forever, we ought to consider our whole life and its duration. And if we do so, we should never employ our care and time about the worst and most ignoble part of ourselves, and make provision only for the few days of our pilgrimage here on earth, without regarding the eternal duration of another world.

The serious consideration of this should make us careful of our souls, and concerned for eternity.

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And in order to secure the happiness of that state, we must work out our salvation, with great care and diligence; that we may avoid the misery and obtain the happiness of another world; there being no comparison between the goods and evils of this life and the next. Let us then consider, and shew ourselves men; let us not so conduct our affairs, as to mind that least which concerns us most. We cannot commit a greater mistake, than to imagine, that our great business in this world, is to mind temporal things. And yet most men run into this mistake, not only at their first setting out, but persist in it all their days. As if their great and main concern was to please themselves for the present, and to provide for this world, as if they were always to live in it; not remembering that they have immortal souls, which shall survive their bodies, and again be re-united to them, to live forever in a state of happiness or misery, according as they have taken care to secure the one, and avoid the other. And

The thoughts of our latter end should make us very serious and composed in our spirits. For if we have immortal souls as well as dying bodies; if we shall live forever, and the happiness of all eternity depends on the right improvement of our time, and our behaviour in this world; then it is no trifling business, no small concern, how we live during our abode here. Whom do not the lively thoughts of death, and its near approaches, make grave and serious, much wiser and more considerate than at any other time of their lives? They can then tell, how they ought to have lived, and improved their time, and what use they would make of it, would God prolong it to them. The near view of another world, is an amazing thing, and apt to inspire us with good thoughts and resolutions. And why should not the clear prospect of it at a distance, and the assured belief thereof, have the same effect
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on us, to make us seriously and in good earnest mind the things which belong to our peace, and to wait with patience, till our change shall come. And to engage us to a constant watchfulness, the great judge of the world hath concealed from us both the time of the general judgment, and of our particular summons out of this world, that we may not be unprovided for what may happen at any time, and which will concern us forever.

The meditation of our latter end should also make us vigorous and industrious in the business of religion, and the salvation of our souls. If we look on this as the great end and design of our living here, and the main scope of all our actions, it will make our whole lives consistent and of a piece; because our thoughts, cares, and endeavours, will be united in one great end and design. Serious thoughts thereof, will tend to excite our diligence and industry, when we consider how great a work we have to do, and how little time to perform it in. It is not an easy work for a man to become good and fit for heaven; it requires time and care, great watchfulness over ourselves, much struggling, and many conflicts with our evil inclinations, which even after they are conquered will often rally and make head again; also a stout resistance of temptations, an obstinate resolution against them, and a patient continuance in well doing. The consideration whereof should make us very careful and diligent to acquire all those graces, virtues, and good dispositions, which may fit and prepare us for eternity; it should move us to do all the good, and be as good as we can, while we have opportunity; because this is the time and season to lay the foundation of our future happiness; "for as we sow, so shall we reap. He that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that sows plentifully, shall reap plentifully." Every degree of virtue and goodness that

that we attain to here, will meet with a suitable reward, a more resplendent degree of glory and happiness in the next life. . And if we have made religion the great care and business of our lives, if we have been diligent to work out our own salvation; when we come to die, we shall have nothing to do but to renew our repentance for the errors and miscarriages of our lives, to beg God's pardon and forgiveness of them, for the sake of the meritorious obedience and sufferings of our blessed Saviour; to comfort ourselves in the goodness and promises of God, and in the glorious hopes of the happiness we are ready to possess; and in the mean time, to exercise faith and patience, till death finally ends the sorrows and miseries of this life. Again,

The meditation of our latter end should make us frequently to exercise and renew our repentance; because we daily offend and provoke God, if not by sins of commission, yet of omission and neglect, and by the imperfection of our best actions and services. If not by presumptuous sins, committed against knowledge, yet by manifold sins of ignorance and infirmity; so that the best of us may every day say with *David*, "who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret faults. If thou shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who can stand." And thus by exercising a frequent, if not daily repentance, we may in a good measure keep our accounts even, without being in confusion at our death; when we know not where to begin our repentance, nor how to perform it in so short a time, and in circumstances of so much weakness and distraction. Whoever frequently attends persons on their sick-beds, must have seen many in such wretched circumstances, as not to know what to do; desirous to repent, but what thro' weakness of body, horror and confusion of mind, not able to attempt it; lamenting that they
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neglected it in their health, and despairing of doing it then with any success and acceptance. — These are sad spectacles indeed, and ought to be loud warnings to all who are in health, and have the opportunity of repentance, to set about this necessary work, even to-day, “lest any of us be hardened thro’ the deceitfulness of sin.”

The consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of life, should make us great husbands of our time, which, next to our immortal souls, is the most precious and valuable thing in the world. As nothing will comfort us more when we come to die, than the remembrance of a well spent life, carefully employed in the service of God, and for the benefit of men; so there is nothing for which our consciences will then more bitterly reproach us, than for an useless and unprofitable, a wicked and vicious life. And our time being very uncertain, we should therefore improve the present moment to the best advantage. It is short in itself, and more so in respect of the great work we have to do. To prevent the manifold distempers of our minds, to preserve our souls from the contagion of sin, to keep them free from the disorders of our appetites and passions, requires a wise conduct, a very careful, prudent management of ourselves. Evil and inveterate habits are not mastered in an instant, nor the contrary virtues in any great degree attained, but by long practice. There must be time, patience, and perseverance, for the doing these things, and we must give *all diligence to add to our faith, knowledge*, and every instance and degree of virtue; since without this, nothing can afford us true comfort in the hour of death, and make us “to lift up our hands with joy, in the day of judgment.” The consideration of this, should make us careful to neglect no opportunity of doing good; and restrain us from wasting too many hours in diversions and visits,

visits, which are great devourers of time, and insensibly take us off from that serious temper of mind, which we ought to have for the concerns of another world. It should make us prefer the doing our duty, and the keeping a good conscience, to all temporal considerations whatsoever, whether of fame, wealth, honour, or power. As for pleasure, there is little in this world true and sincere, besides that of performing our duty, and doing good. A good conscience is a continual feast. And he certainly is best pleased, and most easy in his mind, who is conscious he endeavours to do all the good he can.

The meditation of our mortality should likewise teach us the real value of all temporal enjoyments, so as to be indifferent in the use of them. And nothing can more conduce thereto, than the consideration of their uncertainty, and the shortness of our lives. For if we suppose, that they and we should continue some years, yet there will at last be an end of them or us. And there can be no permanent happiness, no true felicity, where there can be either sorrow, or an end of our joy. Besides, all things in this world afford but little happiness; we cannot do well without them, and very indifferently with them. Most of this world's enjoyments are very dangerous, and always attended with inconveniencies. When we have all we can wish for, we are still uneasy; either something troubles, or nothing pleases us. Fulness gives us pain, long enjoyment of any thing fatiates and cloyes us. Why then should we so highly esteem these temporary, transient enjoyments, or rather amusements, which afford so little content and satisfaction when we have them; so much grief and trouble when we lose them? Considering then how soon we *must*, and how suddenly we *may* leave this world, and all its enjoyments, we have not the least reason to set
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our hearts much upon them. The thoughts of this should also make us contented with our present condition, and patient under all evils and afflictions. For the short time of our abode here, a little may content us, since we do not expect our rest and happiness in this world. If our condition is tolerable, we have reason to be contented; if mean and uneasy, it cannot last long. This should silence our murmurings, and check our discontent. And as to the greatest evils and afflictions of this life, it should make us patient, to consider they will soon have an end. Either they will cease, or make an end of us; and all our patience will have a reward, far beyond our sufferings. The afflictions and sufferings of this life will not last always; they are not like the torments of Hell, either in degree or duration, which are without intermission, and without end.

Lastly, the meditation of our latter end, should put us on a careful, continual, and particular preparation for the time of our death. And the sooner we set about it the better; because when this is done, we shall rescue ourselves from that state of bondage, to which the continual fear of death makes most men subject. Nothing so much abates the terrors of death, as a due preparation for it; let it come sooner or later, to a well prepared mind it makes no difference. But the longer we delay this necessary work, the more unwilling shall we be, and unfit to set about it. Old age and sickness are times very improper to prepare for death, to begin our repentance, and change a bad life. He that prepares not for death, before it draws near him, or that he lies on a sick bed, is like one who begins to study the art of navigation, not till he has occasion to put it in practice; just as his vessel is driven among rocks, and every moment is in danger of being dashed in pieces. Let this then be established

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as a rule and certain principle, that the best and surest preparation for a happy and comfortable death, is a holy and good life. Nothing will so much disarm death of its terrors, as a clear conscience, a sincere desire and endeavour to please God in the general course of our lives, and a sincere repentance for all past errors and miscarriages. And tho' our life is short and uncertain, yet if we begin early, and well manage our time; if we are always moving and pressing forward, we may do a great deal by way of preparation for another world. But the misfortune is, the main business for which men came into the world, namely, to repent of their sins, reform their lives, make their peace with God, and in good time prepare for eternity, are not thought of by them, till they are just going out of it. This, which ought to be the first and greatest concern of their lives, is forgotten and deferred to the last. I shall conclude all with some particular directions concerning our preparation for death.

We should then by frequent meditation accustom ourselves to the thought of it. This will help us to tame this monster, render it more familiar to us, and take off the dread of it. We should also endeavour to mitigate the evil and terror of death, by considering the evils and miseries of life. When we look on death as a remedy for all the evils of life, we shall then begin to be reconciled to it, and if we are wise, shall be glad to get out of the noise, danger, and sufferings to which we are here liable; and be even thankful to God, that we were born to die, and for putting an end to this miserable life, that we may begin one more happy, which shall never have an end. So that whenever God shall think fit to release and dismiss us hence, we ought to esteem it a favour. And by way of farther preparation for death, we should endeavour always to maintain a lively sense of it in our minds,
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that so we may be as much under the power of it, as if it was just approaching; as if the physician or judge had passed sentence of death upon us. We should be always thinking on that which may happen the next moment; if we do so, we can never be extremely surprized; but "whenever our Lord comes, we shall be found watching." And that we may the more effectually do this, we should make it our constant prayer to God, that he would fit us for our dissolution, assist and comfort us in that needful time, without whose gracious aid and support, both physicians and the ministers of God, are but miserable comforters. It should be our daily petition to God, "that he would enable us to perform this last act of our life with decency and constancy of mind, that neither our disease nor our weakness may break the firmness of our spirits, and leave us to be amazed with fear, or betrayed with peevishness, so as to render us uneasy to ourselves or friends." More especially when God thinks fit, either by the nature or present danger of our distemper, to give us a nearer summons of our mortality; we should then be careful to impress on our minds, a deep and more lively sense of another world, in order to quicken our pace, and "to work the work of him that sent us into the world, while it is day; because the night is coming when no man can work."

Nature indeed is fond of life, apt to desire a longer continuance here, and to use many delays and excuses to stay a little longer in this world. And yet a long life, with its usual burdens and infirmities, is seldom desirable; for it is but the same thing over again, or worse. So many more days and nights, summers and winters, a repetition of the same pleasures, only with less pleasure and relish; a return of the same or greater pains and troubles, but having less patience and strength to bear them.

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Let us then be of good courage in the approaches of death, since we see land at a distance, and that the storm we are in will quickly be over, and then it will be as if it had never been, or rather the remembrance thereof will afford us much pleasure.

And should it please God to exercise us with great pains or tedious sickness, we should make use of all the considerations, which reason and religion can afford, to mitigate and alleviate our sufferings, and to make a short way a little more smooth and easy. The best of us, have no privilege and exemption from the common accidents of humanity; for no piety can certainly secure to us an easy and comfortable death. In this, as in all things, we must resign ourselves to God's good pleasure, and submit to him, the time, manner, and all other circumstances of our departure hence; whether our sun shall set in a cloud, or shine brightest when going down. But however it sets, still it is the sun, the fountain of light, and will rise gloriously. There are always the seeds of joy and comfort in a good man's conscience, and tho' buried for a while, they will again spring forth. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart* ||. I will conclude all in the words of Moses, *O that all were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end* *.

|| Psal. 97. 11. * Deut. 32. 29.

D I S.

DISCOURSE CXXIII. *Ben. Calamy.*

The hazard of a death-bed repentance.

Numb. 23. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

TH^{O'} wicked men will not be at the pains of living the life, yet they wish and desire to die the death of the righteous, and to have their latter end like his. As much as men love their sins, yet they would not willingly be damned for them; they cannot endure to think seriously of passing from this world into an impenitent state. The fears of another world will often occur, to torment the sinner, and make his thoughts troublesome to him. An uneasy bed, a broken sleep, a sudden affliction, an *|| hand-writing on the wall*, will sometimes force us, whether we will or no, to smite on our breasts, and reflect sadly upon our past sins, and the fatal issue of them; nay, our own conscience will fly in our face, notwithstanding all our arts to divert or lull it asleep. That which makes men so neglectful of their immortal concerns, so pleasant whilst they live in known sins, is, that they depend on God's goodness, for time and opportunity of repenting either in a lingering sickness, or declining old age. They are perhaps now young and healthful, strong and lusty; their blood moves briskly, their spirits are active and lively, without any symptoms of approaching sickness: Therefore they think it

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|| Dan. 5. 5.

will be time enough to look after another life, when their strength decays, and death makes its near approach. Was this true, there would be two ways to heaven ; one by *living righteously, and godly, and soberly in this present world* ||. The other, by repenting at our death, of a wicked life. And it is easy to suppose which way the greatest part of men would chuse. And was this true, we might have both the pleasure of being wicked, and the hopes of being saved ; we might then spare ourselves all the trouble of religion, and yet not miss its reward. We might spend our days in pleasure, gratify every vain humour and appetite, deny ourselves nothing that our lusts and passions crave, live without God in the world, and yet at last die in the Lord ||.

There is not any thing that so notoriously defeats the design of our Saviour's coming into the world, and renders our Christianity so useless to us, as this one presumption ; that the whole of religion, or all that is necessary to salvation, may be performed upon a sick or death-bed ; for if it may be done as well then as before, what need we attempt it sooner ? what need we disquiet ourselves in vain, about the exercises of virtue and piety, or maintain a painful and ungrateful conflict, with the inclinations and inordinate cravings of our flesh ; when by lamenting at any time our sins, and trusting to the performances of *Jesus Christ*, we may be as secure of paradise, as if we had all our days *kept a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men* ? since in this we run no other hazard, but that of dying suddenly, which happens to very few. As eternal bliss and happiness is a thing of such vast moment to us, that to defer making provision for it, but one day, is certainly a very great indiscretion ; so for a man to devote all his days to his own pleasure and humour, and reserve for God, for whose service he was born, but one day only, and that the worst
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and, the last, this is perfect madness, the utmost stupidity. The extreme folly and danger of which, I shall endeavour to evince by several particulars: and let us consider,

How little can be done by a wicked man on his sick or death-bed? the whole of a death-bed repentance is generally no more than a few good words and wishes, a superficial confession of sin and wickedness, some broken prayers and pious expressions to the minister, who then perhaps shall be sent for, however before despised; and it may be receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which he wholly neglected when in health: This, with a legacy of his ill gotten goods, to charitable uses, is, in common esteem, making a good Christian end. As I am willing to allow the dying penitent all advantages, and to consider his repentance in the very best circumstances; I shall not instance in such as are violently and suddenly hurried out of the world, in the midst of their wickedness, and have hardly time so much as to beg mercy at God's hands; nor yet in those who are taken with such diseases, as render them incapable of any rational thoughts; and yet these are cases that often happen. For there are many who intend when they come to die, to call to mind their wicked ways, and be extremely sorrowful for them; but their sickness is of that sort, as to deprive them of memory and understanding: So that when they are seriously to consider their past life, alas! they remember not one thing good or bad. The time which they fixed to prepare for another world is come, but their distemper proves such, that instead of dying very piously and wisely, perhaps they depart raving mad. I shall therefore omit these, and the like considerations, and only put the case of one who dies leisurely and by degrees, who retains his memory and understanding to the last, and is able in some measure

sure, to recount all his former wickedness. And yet what can such an one do towards the securing his everlasting salvation? For,

Suppose he may be truly sorrowful, for what he hath done amiss, and the remembrance of his evil ways is very bitter and grievous to him; yet it is hard to think, that his mind should on a sudden be really altered; (I speak of such as have delighted in sin and vanity, and hated nothing so much as piety and virtue;) that such men's judgments should be so wonderfully changed, as immediately to lay aside all their former prejudices against goodness and righteousness; and be reconciled in a moment to what they have so long declared open enmity against; that just a little before they die, they should become as absolutely of another mind, as if they were in truth other men. For a man at once to think, believe, judge, and act quite contrary to what he hath thought, believed, and done, for forty, fifty, or sixty years, is really incredible. So that in truth, the grief and sorrow of a dying penitent, is no other, than, that of every common malefactor, who when he is ready to receive the punishment of his crimes, is then very angry with himself, for what he hath done. He is sorry and troubled, not that he sinned, but that he cannot escape suffering for it; it grieves him to think he can now sin no longer, that all the pleasure of it is past, and nothing remains, but a sad reckoning and account. So that if wicked men are confounded at the sense of their guilt, when they come to die, yet this is more the effect of those fears and horrors, they at such times feel, than of any true, sincere repentance. But if the dying penitent most earnestly begs God's pardon, for the sake of Jesus Christ, pleading his merits and satisfaction, yet this is but to mock God, who thinks it enough to ask him forgiveness with the remainder and last drawing of their breath.

For what do they otherwise, that die this kind of well-dying, but say unto God, we beseech thee, O Lord, that all the falshood, forswearing, and treachery of our life past, may be pleasing to thee, and acceptable in thy sight; that thou wilt for our sakes, (who had no leisure to do any thing for thine) change thy nature and forget to be a just God; that thou wouldst love injuries and oppressions, call ambition wisdom, and charity foolishness. Certainly they who depend upon such prayers, have either found out a new God, or made one.

And should he back his prayer with restitution of all that he hath gotten unjustly, and with charity to the poor, and forgiveness of all the injuries he hath received from other men (which are excellent beginnings of a new life, if done in time) yet there can be no virtue or praise in restoring that which we can no longer keep, or in giving away what we must necessarily part with. And as for pardoning injuries received, alas! wicked men, in their life-time, take present pay, immediate revenge; there being not one injury done them, that they have not fully returned. Lastly, the utmost that a sick or dying sinner can do, is to make strong and sincere resolutions against his former evil courses, and to walk in all virtue and godliness, should God continue his life. This is what men usually trust to in this extremity, they hope God will accept of such unfeigned resolutions, for repentance. But let us consider, that there is nothing more easy than to resolve well, especially when we are under fear; that there is nothing so difficult which men will not readily promise to perform, if thereby they may but deliver themselves from a pressing and imminent danger. But yet how hard do we find it by daily experience, to keep close and constant to those religious resolutions which we make even in the time of our health and vigour, and that upon the most
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serious deliberation? How many have we known, who in sickness and under the fears and apprehensions of death, have by most solemn, and no doubt sincere vows, obliged themselves to walk in better ways; and yet, as soon as restored to health, have presently *returned like the dog to the vomit, or the sow to her wallowing in the mire* *? The only time then of making good and lasting resolutions of living well, is when we can examine indifferently and determine impartially, when our judgments are good, and our passions quick. But all the purposes of sick men, are most commonly like the vows of a mariner in a great tempest, which vanish away and are forgotten upon altering of the weather. Thus the ungodly man's resolutions are just according to the degree of danger he is in; so long as there are hopes of recovery, his intentions of amendment are weak and slender; but as death comes near, his resolutions encrease, and get strength; and when he finds little hopes of living any longer, then he strenuously resolves to live better; that is, he promises and vows to do, what according to his own fears and opinion, is impossible to be done. And can we think God will accept of such a purpose of living well, founded on no other consideration or motive, than that a person believes his life is just gone?

But suppose the dying man resolves to leave all his sins; yet, alas! he hath entertained them so long, that they are not so easily parted with! even good men spend a great part of their time, in most hearty and frequent begging the divine assistance, in using their utmost endeavours to conquer and subdue their unruly passions; and even wicked men complain enough of the difficulty of this. What more common with them, than to say, it is impossible to resist the allurements of good company, the charms

of beauty, or the temptations of gain and honour? Nay, do they not often try to excuse themselves in many sins, by pleading that they are so used to them, that they cannot possibly leave them? For instance, that they swear before they think of it; that they cannot restrain their passion when provoked; that they have tried to break off some lewd customs, and have prevailed for a while, but that then they have returned upon them with greater violence; and can they then think this so easy when they come to die? that a good resolution and a few prayers, shall in an hour, or a day, so vanquish sin in general, as to qualify them to appear before God?

When therefore men make such resolutions of amendment, they resolve they know not what, for it is a work of great time and patience: It requires long consideration, assiduous watchfulness, and unwearied diligence, to extirpate those inveterate habits, which by a long wicked life we have contracted. To mortify those lusts that have so long tyrannized and domineered over us, must be done by degrees. There is very little regard therefore to be given to such hasty resolutions, as are violently extorted from us, by great and present fear; and be they never so strong and sincere, yet still there is a great difference between resolving and performing. Besides, why should that be thought sufficient to save us at the last gasp, which all agree is not sufficient to put us in a state of salvation, whilst we continue well and in health? Wishes and purposes made in the time of our strength, do not alone make a bad man good; why then should they alone be sufficient on our death-bed? I proceed,

To consider how far short all this comes of what the holy scriptures require as the indispensable conditions of salvation. For should all which a wicked man may do upon his death-bed amount to repentance, yet where is obedience to the laws of the gospel?

gospel? As for those indeed who in the sincerity of their hearts have done God's will, their repentance shall be accepted for what they have fallen short in, and which the best of us all have need to lament. But certainly a short repentance at last, was never intended to answer for an universal disobedience and a whole life of wickedness. Repentance from dead works, and resolutions of a godly life, are required as a preparative for Christianity, and are therefore necessary in adult persons even before their baptism; but then by our Christian profession, which we take upon us in baptism, we are obliged to a new life, to all manner of purity and righteousness; wherein we expressly promise to walk in God's holy commandments all our days; the keeping whereof is absolutely necessary for the obtaining our future reward. This I shall illustrate briefly thus: The ways of virtue and righteousness, and of sin and wickedness, are two roads that are perfectly opposite, and directly contrary to each other. Suppose then a man, for a great reward, is obliged in one day, to travel so many miles northward, but presuming he hath time enough to do this in, he travels the quite contrary way, and goes southward; at last, all on a sudden, when the sun is just ready to set, and night comes on apace, then he begins to consider, how much he is out of his way; and finding himself weary and unfit for travel, and lamenting his own folly in losing his reward, promiseth if he were to begin again, he would go directly to the place commanded. But ought this man to have the promised reward? since before he can challenge that, he must first return back to the point from whence he set out, and even then he has his whole journey still to go. This is just the case of a wicked man upon his death-bed; he is not only to unravel all his former works, to break off all his lewd customs, to mortify all his foolish passions,

and unruly lusts, to forsake all his deadly sins, and to repent of his past ill spent life ; but he is then to live a new life, to accustom himself to the practice of goodness, and to make it habitual to him. His mind is then to be furnished with all Christian virtues and graces, he hath his whole race still to run, and his salvation to work out ; and is the least part of this possible to be done, on a languishing bed of sickness ?

If we make religion the business of our whole lives, and in every thing exercise ourselves to keep a conscience unblameable ; yet when we come to die, we shall find work enough to employ us. To behave decently and as becomes Christians in such a condition, patiently to bear our affliction, cheerfully to submit to God's will, to beg pardon for our manifold failings and miscarriages, readily to leave this world, and all that is dear to us in it ; these and many more are the exercises of a Christian, on a bed of sickness. And how few are there that are then able to bear up with any tolerable courage ? We do not count him a wise man, that will leave so much as his worldly affairs at that time unsettled. And when our very natural powers and faculties are disabled, when our bodies are full of pain, and our minds of distractions and perplexities ; how shall we be able to do all that work, for which our whole life is little enough, and for which alone we were born into this world ? This the devil subtilly foresees, and if he can but prevail with men to put off the care of religion, till a sick bed, he will then find other employment for them. And as before in their life-time, he told them it was too soon, so then he will suggest that it is too late to repent and turn to God. Let those who think of deferring their repentance till a death-bed, sometimes visit sick persons ; let them look on their condition, when they lie a dying, and then judge, whether
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that be a fit time to do so great a work in? They may then see how troubled and disturbed their thoughts and minds as well as bodies are; how fast their reason and understanding decay; how their memories are lost, their senses fail them, and how unable to help themselves. And is this a time to prepare for eternity; to vanquish all sins and to obtain all grace? Is this the fittest opportunity we can chuse, to make our peace with God, to sue out our pardon, and to perform all those duties of piety, mercy, justice and charity, in which we have been hitherto defective? or rather are not they then happy, who at such a time have nothing else to do, but to die? Would we but take the opinion of those who are themselves in this condition, and be moved by their judgments, they will give testimony to the truth of what has been said. Do not they when surprized by death, offer all their goods and substance, for which they have so long and vainly laboured, to procure, if possible, some longer time, tho' it was but a short truce, and little respite? What are they not willing to give, on condition that God would spare them yet *a little while before they go hence, and be no more seen* †? Did you ever hear of any dying penitent, that did not a thousand times wish, he had begun sooner? And how earnestly do such warn every one by their example, to take heed of trusting to a death-bed repentance? But,

The last thing proper to be considered is, what hopes or encouragement God hath given us, to believe, that he will abate of those conditions, which are required in the gospel. Now tho' the conditions of salvation are the same to persons sick and dying, as to men in health; and that both are under the same covenant, and the same actual obedience is required of all under equal penalties; yet

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† Psal. 39. 13.

there are two instances commonly mentioned in favour of a death-bed repentance. The one is that of the *Labourers*, "who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, and yet received equal wages with those that came in at the first, and had borne the heat of the day †". But it is to be observed,

That these labourers came in as soon as they were called and invited; had they been offered work, and all the day refused, and only at last, just in the close of the evening, been willing to have worked, this had been something like the case of Christians delaying repentance, till they are just summoned to give an account. But this parable rather represents the case of *an heathen man*, that never heard of Christ, or his religion, till just before his death; whose coming into the church so late, shall not therefore hinder his receiving a full reward. But this is by no means the condition of those, who having made a covenant with Christ in baptism, and afterwards most notoriously failed in performing what they promised; do then only return to their service "when the night is come, in which no man can work ‡." He that came in at the eleventh hour was under no engagement to work any sooner; he had no where promised it, nor had the master commanded it, and therefore he was without fault. And he who came in at the eleventh hour did yet work one hour, which tho' but a short time, yet is very different from that man's, who comes in but at the twelfth, which is the case of all death-bed penitents.

The other instance often named in favour of a death-bed repentance is, that of the thief on the cross; a case so very miraculous, and extraordinary, that the like never can be expected again, unless our blessed Lord should once more descend from
heaven,

† Mat. 20. 9. ‡ John 9. 4.

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heaven, and suffer in company with some condemned sinner; who had such a wonderful repentance and faith as his was. But this example affords but little comfort to those, who have for many years professed the religion of Jesus, and yet deferred the practice of it, till their death.

But some will say, is there then no hopes? no remedy? what must a wicked man do when he happens to be thus surprized by death? I am far from taking upon me to limit the mercies of God; *they are over all his works*, and are as infinite as himself. Such persons therefore, as have spent their days in luxury, profaneness, and contempt of all religion, but at last humbly beg pardon, heartily promise, and resolve amendment; we must leave to his goodness, pity, and gracious compassion, who tho' he ties us up to rules, yet is not himself bound by them, and who may do more for us than he hath any where promised. And therefore persons in such circumstances, ought to be encouraged and quickened, to do all that they can, and to submit themselves to God's good pleasure. All that can be said to such men is, that the greater and more remarkable their repentance is, the more hopes there will be of their forgiveness. But certain it is, that God hath no where expressly declared that he will accept of all our sorrows, submissions, promises, and restitutions, made on a sick bed; all these do not amount to what is the plain condition of the covenant of grace. Indeed what God may do none can say, but he hath plainly enough told us what we are to do; and it is the greatest madness in the world, to run so great a hazard, as that we cannot be saved without a dispensation from the ordinary rule. "Do I say (saith St. *Augustine*) such an one shall be damned? I dare not. Do I say, he shall be saved? I cannot. What say I then? Will you free yourself from all uncertainty in this matter? Repent

now whilst you are in health; forsake your sins whilst you are able to commit them, and then you are sure of pardon." There is indeed another church in the world that can teach men how to be saved on a death-bed, even without repentance; which hath found out ways to make it very easy for any ungodly wretch to secure himself from hell, by less than half an hour's work; *but we have not so learned Christ*, nor dare we give men certain assurance of everlasting life, on any other terms, than of a constant, habitual obedience to the laws of the gospel. The only certain way to die well, is to live well.

Nor shall I go about to determine how much of our life must be spent in the practice of righteousness and goodness, before we can be said to have lived well; since this varies according to the circumstances of men, which are infinite: however, I think this may safely be said, that so much time of our life ought to be spent in the practice of goodness, as will be necessary to make us holy, humble, pure, meek, patient, just, temperate, lovers of God and men; for the gospel does not promise eternal life and glory to any but persons thus qualified; and it is certain, that a few pious wishes, prayers and purposes, made at our death, will not suffice to denominate us such. God doth not watch just how men die, but he will judge every man according to his works, and the deeds he hath done in the flesh; and those dispositions we have nourished, loved, and delighted in all our life, will follow and attend us to another world.

To conclude, let us not judge nor censure others whose lives we may have been acquainted with, and whose condition may seem sad and deplorable, (such we are to pity, pray for, and exercise our charity upon, and leave to God's mercy) but let

us resolve not to defer the care of our own souls to sick or death-bed, but to-day, even whilst it is called to-day, to depart from iniquity. Let us all endeavour therefore, so to live now, as we shall wish we had done when we come to lie upon our death-bed; let us pursue those things now, which we shall then like to think of, and reflect upon with pleasure; and presently forsake all such things, the remembrance of which, at that time, will be bitter to us. Let us whilst we are well and in health, entertain the same thoughts and apprehensions of things, that we shall have when we are sick and dying. Let us now as much despise this world, think as ill of sin, as seriously of God and eternity, as we shall then do; for this is the great commendation of the righteous man, that every one desires to die his death; that at last all men are of his mind and persuasion, and would chuse his condition, and say, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

DISCOURSE CXXIV. Abp. Sharp.

A serious persuasive to a holy life.

Phil. 4. 8.

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

HERE are many particulars recommended by the apostle, to our thoughts and practice, tho' not so many as the words which express them, there being several used in this enumeration, of the same meaning and importance ; and which may be reduced to these following observations, and are so many instances of a Christian's duty : namely, a constant adherence to the true religion. Honesty and justice in our dealings. A life of chastity and purity. And the constant practice of every thing virtuous and commendable. This being the true meaning of the words, I shall make them the heads of my present exhortation.

And first, *Whatsoever things are true, think on these things.* The truths St. Paul here exhorts us to remember, are no doubt the truths of the gospel, delivered by our Saviour ; these we should think on, persist in, and be never prevailed on to depart from. It is an inestimable blessing of God to this kingdom, that he not only vouchsafes us the
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light of his gospel, but has also delivered it to us, with greater purity and sincerity, and freer from the mixture of errors, than to any other people. Were we all sensible of the state of religion in other countries, we should soon be convinced how exceedingly happy we of this church are, above all Christians in Christendom. Let us therefore, firmly adhere to the truths we have been taught and do profess; and to that church from whom we learnt them. Tho' I think no church infallible, yet if the truths of religion are to be taken from the rules of holy scriptures, and the platform of the primitive churches, then the church of *England*, both as to doctrine and practice, is undoubtedly the purest this day in the world; the most orthodox in faith, the freest from *idolatry*, *superstition*, and *enthusiasm*, of any now extant. This I can say, and declare it with great seriousness and sincerity, that if the religion of Jesus Christ, delivered in the new testament, is the true religion, as most certain it is; then I believe in my conscience, that the communion of the church of *England* is a safe way to salvation, nay, the safest of any I know in the world. And therefore let me exhort you, steadfastly to hold fast and persevere in this communion. As here we have *the things that are true*, let us think of, and heartily embrace them, live and die in the profession of them.

The next thing recommended to us, is universal honesty, justice, and righteousness in our conversation. "Whatsoever things are true, honest, and just; think on these things." The words honest and just, import the same thing, tho' sometimes honest signifies grave, or venerable. And indeed, if we are not sincerely just and honest, it is in vain to expect any advantage from our professing the truth. Whoever can allow himself in the practice of any knavish, dishonest, indirect dealing,

dealing, however orthodox his belief and opinion may be, yet he is no true Christian. Let then our interests be what they will, yet in all our dealings, we must be strictly just and upright; use no tricks, practise no ill arts to serve our ends; but in all our transactions with men, we must deal with that simplicity, integrity, and good conscience, as becomes those who are the disciples of him, who was the most innocent, sincere and upright person in the world. For, no dishonesty can prosper long; whatever present turns it may serve, in a little time it will be bitterly repented; but righteousness and justice will establish a man's ways; the upright man, tho' not always the richest, is ever the safest.

The apostle having recommended to our practice whatever is true, honest, and just, he then adds, the things that are *pure*; meaning thereby, that we should study to be chaste, and temperate in our hearts and lives, avoiding all manner of lewdness and sensuality. And if it was necessary to put Christians in mind of this, in an age of so much strictness and devotion; it is abundantly more so in ours, when luxury, debauchery, and all manner of immorality so greatly prevail among us. I pray God to make us all sensible of the great folly and wickedness, the danger and dreadful consequences of such practices. And if we would preserve a sense of religion on our minds; if we have any regard for our health, estates, and families; any intention not to entail sottishness and diseases on our families; if we love our souls, and hope to see God; "let us abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Let us learn to live soberly, and chastely, to practice purity and temperance, to avoid whoredom and drunkenness. For however we may slight these things, yet we are expressly told, that *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*. That "neither adulterers, fornicators,

unclean persons, nor drunkards shall ever inherit the kingdom of God, or of Christ."

But the apostle having recommended truth, honesty, and purity, to the daily thoughts and practice of all Christians, he then sums up the whole in generals, advising them, not only to be careful in those things, but also to improve in every other virtue that is praise-worthy, and esteemed among men. For, says he, "whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, any praise in them; think on these things." From hence we may learn what obligations we are under. For if the gospel of Christ favours us with such glorious light, such invaluable promises, and mighty assistances, we may in reason suppose, that in return great things are expected from us. To believe and profess the gospel, to do no wrong to any one, to be free from lewdness and drunkenness; tho' these are great and good things, yet Christianity obliges us to much more: for we must also be kind and charitable, as well as just and honest; modest, meek, and humble, as well as temperate and chaste. And not only so, but we must even avoid all appearance of evil. We must not only abstain from acts of injustice, but from doing a hard, ill natured thing to any one; not only keep ourselves within the known limits of temperance and chastity, but avoid all opposite vices leading thereto; and the same in all other instances. For we are to endeavour to be as free from blame in our whole conversation as we possibly can; and besides, to do as much good as our circumstances will permit; this is to be a Christian indeed, and "to adorn the doctrine of God in all things." Extremely happy and great will be the reward of those, who thus walk worthy of their heavenly calling. They will here enjoy the solid peace and assurance of God's favour, which far exceed all earthly blessings.

blessings; and hereafter partake of eternal glory. Having thus given an account of what things we are to make the main pursuit of our lives, it will be proper also to say something of the methods and means which are necessary to be used for that purpose.

And the first thing I would exhort you to, is to use your endeavours to possess your minds with a hearty sense of Almighty God, and the absolute necessity of being seriously religious. Tho' mankind are naturally disposed to believe a God and religion, yet many of us have no lively, hearty sense of it; we use religion as we do our clothes; they are convenient and necessary, therefore we wear them, but as to the form and make, we follow the custom of the country wherein we live. Yet as our clothes alter not our features, or the shape of our bodies, so neither doth the religion we profess, any way affect the temper of our souls. In each case we only consult outward conveniency, being still the same persons, both inwardly and outwardly; but this way of being religious can do us no great kindness. Our religion will never serve us to any extraordinary purpose, unless our hearts are affected with it, as well as our understandings. If therefore we love either our happiness in this world or the next, let us be persuaded to make it our principal care, to get a lively and vigorous sense of God impressed on our minds; and to approve ourselves to him, by walking as our blessed Saviour hath taught us; if we do this, we shall experience the great benefit of it, both here and hereafter. It is in vain to think of passing tolerably thro' this world, unless we have the hopes of God's favour to support us under the multitude of evil accidents, to which the state of human life necessarily exposes us. And as to the other world, without such hopes we are perfectly lost. Nor can we entertain any

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rational hopes of God's blessing and favour, unless we make it our chief business to serve, please and obey him.

There are a great many excellent rules and maxims, that we usually give our friends and children, whereby to make their fortunes. We are apt to advise them to get a true understanding of their business, and to pursue it with diligence; to keep out of ill company, to avoid drinking, gaming, and lewdness; to study the tempers and humours of mankind, and dextrously apply themselves to those they want to converse with; and no doubt these are exceeding good rules, and very fit to be studied and practised. But still there is one rule, without which, the others will signify little, to make the life of man easy and happy; and that is, to preserve a lively sense of God on our spirits, to have his fear always before our eyes, to love him above all things, to value his favour more than life, and dread his displeasure as the worst of evils. He that is possessed of this good principle, will naturally fall into the practice of them. And as to have the fear and love of God in our hearts is the most effectual way to obtain the divine blessing; so it is the only means to make our circumstances happy, if they are good; or easy and supportable, if bad. If therefore we would prosper and not be miserable, let us not be contented with a superficial outside religion, but affect our minds with a deep sense of God, and our duty towards him; and endeavour to impress the same sentiments on our children and friends. In truth, our present and future happiness so much depend on the true belief of a God, on our love to him, and the hopes of his favour; that without it, the present world, and all the imaginary pleasures and glories thereof, would to all wise and good men, appear not only an empty, dull, unsatisfactory place; but a dismal, melancholy prison. Was
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it supposed, that all things here were the effects of blind chance, or fatal necessity and that no wisdom and goodness presides, to take care of mankind, no considerate man would desire to live in this world.

But after we have possessed our minds with a hearty sense of God, and of his providence, presence, and goodness, so as to make it the business of our lives to recommend ourselves to him; we should in the next place be careful to keep up that sense, by a constant and daily worship of him. For the sake of God, and our own souls, we must not neglect our prayers. We cannot expect God to bless us, if we do not make conscience of daily paying our tribute of honour and worship. We must therefore be constant in our private devotions; as we every day receive renewed pledges of God's love and goodness in various instances, so every day our affection and gratitude should be expressed to him, by hearty prayer and thanksgiving. This is absolutely necessary, if we would preserve a hearty sense of religion on our minds. Those who have families, should consider themselves as heads and governors of a *society*. The first notion of a *society* being that of a *family*. Every family is a little kingdom, and every kingdom ought to be a great family. And is it natural or decent, that there should be any society on earth, not to own and worship God? And yet I fear there are great numbers of families in this kingdom, wherein God is not so much as named, unless to affront him, by cursing and swearing. With just reason we complain of the great looseness, prophaneness, and irreligion of the age. I doubt much of this is owing to the masters of families; would they take more care to have their children and servants worship God, we should have it otherwise: but if we give our domesticks the opportunity of seeing our bad qualities, and afford

afford them none to learn our good ones, how can we expect they should have any sense of religion? They know we offend God by many rash words and sinful actions; but they do not see us repenting and asking God's pardon, by solemn prayers and applications to the throne of grace. Let us then be serious in this matter; and bring religion into our families, and there pay our common tribute of prayer and praise, for the mercies we daily receive. Our Saviour seemed to have respect to this duty, when he made that gracious promise, that "where two or three are gathered together in his name, there would he be in the midst of them." And the very petitions of his own prayer are so contrived, as to make it most proper for more than one, and which seems naturally to refer to the worshipping God in our families. But,

As we should not neglect to worship God in our closets and families, so it equally concerns us, to frequent the public worship of God in his own house; it being one of the greatest blessings and privileges we can enjoy. Let us then embrace all opportunities, not only on sundays, but other days of resorting to the public assemblies, and there join in our solemn sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving; which offered up with an honest, devout mind, will find acceptance, and produce such effects, as our closet prayers will not; there being certainly more promises made to *public* than to *private* prayers; not but both are good, and absolutely necessary.

And as I am now considering the means and instruments of religion, I cannot omit most seriously to recommend to you, the solemn observation of the Lord's day: I am sensible, that some are too superstitious in this matter; and which proves rather a snare to mens consciences, than of any service to religion. But to be nice and scrupulous about

about the Lord's day service, is far from my intention to recommend. The laws of God and man in a great measure leave this to our own discretion and circumstances. However, thus much is certainly necessary, that every one who professes Christianity, ought to have a religious regard for the Lord's-day, by devoting it to spiritual uses, both public and private. It has been observed by some good men, and which I believe may be true, "that a man shall prosper much better in both his spiritual and temporal affairs, all the week after, for his careful observance of the Lord's-day." And I am further persuaded, that those have little or no sense of religion, who make no conscience of sanctifying, or putting a difference between this and other days; for, was there no divine command to have it appropriated to religious uses, which I believe there is, yet to do so, is both prudent and beneficial to mankind; since besides the civil and temporal conveniencies of it, we owe the very being of Christianity among us to the religious observance of this day. And it is worthy our observation, that the most profligate of both sexes, who by wickedness come to an untimely end, do generally impute their misfortunes to their breaking, (as they express it) the sabbath day. Under this head, it will be proper to mention another duty, too much neglected, that of frequently coming to the holy sacrament. We can have little hopes of making any great progress in virtue and holiness, if we neglect this holy ordinance, which Christ hath appointed for conveying his grace, and enabling us to overcome our sins, to improve in virtue and goodness. Many indeed are the prejudices, tho' without reason, against this duty. But whoever designs honestly, and endeavours to lead a Christian life, may with as little scruple come every month to the communion, as every week to church to say his prayers

prayers or hear a sermon. For whoever does not so live, as to be qualified to approach the sacrament, every month, week or day, if there is occasion ; I fear is not fit to come once in seven years. A due preparation depends not on setting aside some days, to put ourselves in a religious posture ; but on the plain, natural frame and temper of our souls, as to their constant inclinations to virtue and goodness. A man that seriously endeavours to live honestly and religiously, may come to the sacrament at an hour's warning, and be a worthy communicant ; whilst another who lives a careless, sensual life, shall set apart a week or a month, to exercise acts of repentance, and prepare himself for the communion, and yet not be so worthy a receiver as the other. Tho' even such an one may be also worthy, provided he is really honest and sincere, in what he is about, and so remembers his vows, as not to return again into his former state of carelessness and sensuality.

I verily believe most of the doubts, fears, and scruples, that generally arise about receiving the sacrament, are without any ground or good reason ; and therefore I am of opinion, that every well disposed person, who has no other design in that action, but to do his duty to God, to express his belief and hopes in Jesus Christ, and his thankfulness to God for him, may as safely come at any time to the Lord's table, as come to church to say his prayers. And if so, how culpable are they, who having so many opportunities, seldom or never join in this solemn institution, which was designed on purpose to be the means of our growing in grace and virtue, in love to God and the world ? If then we have any serious regard for our souls, and are truly sensible how much we want the grace of Christ, to lead a life pure and holy, I persuade myself, we shall not be strangers at the Lord's table.

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And let me recommend to you not a means or instrument of being good, but a principal virtue itself; at all times useful and in season; and that is to walk in love, to study peace and unity, and live in all dutiful subjection to government; endeavouring to promote the public happiness and tranquillity, and not to disturb the public peace, under any pretence, or abet those that do; especially, not to make a rent or schism in the church, upon a meer point of state. In all ages and countries, great revolutions have frequently happened. But it was scarce ever known, for Christians to separate from the church on that account. They still kept unanimously to their doctrine and worship, and no otherwise concerned themselves in the turns of state, how great soever, than peaceably to submit to the power in being; and heartily to pray to God, so to prosper their government, and direct all their affairs, that all their subjects *might lead quiet and peaceable lives, under them, in all godliness and honesty.* And when in any revolution, a prince was advanced to the throne, that was a good man, and one who would encourage the true religion; in such case, they not only readily submitted to him, but acknowledged it as a great blessing of God, for to raise up such a governor to rule over them. This was the notion, this the practice of the primitive Christians, nay of the Christians in all ages, in matters of this nature; and whatever some may think to the contrary, this is the doctrine of the church of *England.*

† “Let me then persuade those who profess christianity, to answer those obligations to a holy life, which their religion lays upon them. We call ourselves Christians, and should be much offended if any denied us this title. But if we are so, let us make good our profession by a suitable life and practice. We profess to entertain the doctrine of the

the gospel, to be taught and instructed by the best master, to be the disciples of the most perfect institution in the world; to have embraced a religion which contains the most exact rules for the conduct of our lives, lays down the plainest precepts, sets before us the best patterns and examples of a holy life, and offers us the greatest assistances and encouragements to this purpose. We are furnished with the best arguments to excite us to holiness and virtue; we are awed with the greatest fears, and animated with the best hopes to the practice of it. And whoever makes such a profession as this, obliges himself to live answerably, and not to contradict it, or act contrary to what he professes. For with what face can any man continue in the practice of any known sin, who believes the holy doctrine of the gospel, which forbids all sin, under the highest and severest penalties? Did we but regard the laws of Christianity as we do the laws of the land. Were we but persuaded that fraud and oppression, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanness, covetousness and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and religion, will bring men to hell, as certainly as treason and felony will bring them under the sentence of the law. This would have a great tendency to keep us from sin; and if the gospel has not this effect upon us, it shews that we do not truly believe it.

If we profess ourselves Christians, it may justly be expected, that we should evidence this by our actions, and not live as the heathens did, who walked in the lusts of the flesh, and of uncleanness; who were intemperate, cruel and unmerciful. But let us who profess Christianity, whenever we are tempted to any vile lust, remember and consider what title we bear; by what name we are called, whose disciples we are; and then say, shall we al-

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allow ourselves in any impiety or wickedness, who pretend to be endued with that grace of God, which teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts? Shall we cherish any sinful passion, who have put off the old man with all his evil deeds? If by our lives and actions we contradict that religion which we profess, we thereby prove ourselves hypocrites; and that we have taken up our religion for a fashion, or merely out of custom. So that the reason why we are Christians, instead of Jews, Turks, or Heathens, is because we were born in a Christian country, and that religion came first in our way.

A Christian does not pretend to have more wit or understanding than a Turk or Heathen; but he professeth to live better than they, to be more chaste and temperate, more just and charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men. If he fails in these, what signifies all the noise and stir about the gospel and doctrine of Christ? If a man professes himself a Christian, and doth not live better than others, he is a meer pretender in religion. And how great a scandal must this needs be to our blessed Saviour and his gospel? The impieties and vices of professed Christians, have caused many severe reflections upon Christianity. For there is nothing can more disparage religion, than a lewd and debauched life. This consideration ought greatly to affect us. For a Jew or a Turk is not so great an enemy to Christianity, as a wicked and vicious Christian. Therefore let me beseech Christians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour, and the credit of their religion, that they would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Christianity. And whoever are resolved to continue in a vicious course, they had better abandon their profession than keep a vizard which can only frighten others from religion. Many are apt to

pity poor heathens, who never heard of Christ, and sadly to condole their case; but as our Saviour said on another occasion; *weep not for them*, but let us *weep for ourselves*. There is no person so miserable as a degenerate Christian; because he falls into the greatest misery, from the greatest advantages and opportunities of being happy. Those sins which are committed by Christians under the gospel, are of deeper dye, and attended with more heinous aggravations, than those of heathens. And better had it been if we had never known the gospel, nor never heard of Christ, than after embracing it, not to depart from iniquity.

Let these arguments prevail to awaken men to a serious consideration and real reformation of their lives; let them oblige all who call themselves Christians, to live up to the fundamental laws of our religion; to love God and our neighbour; to do to every man, as we would have him do to us; to mortify our lusts, subdue our passions, and sincerely endeavour to grow in every grace and virtue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. This indeed would become our profession, would be honourable to religion, and remove one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the gospel. For if ever the Christian religion be effectually recommended, it must be by the holy and unblameable lives of its professors. It would then look with so amiable a countenance, as to invite many to it; and carry so much majesty and authority, as to command reverence from its greatest enemies, and make men to acknowledge, that of a truth we believe in God, and by our lives adorn the doctrine of Christ, and glorify our Father which is in heaven."

DISCOURSE CXXV. *Ben. Calamy.*

The important concern of a future state.

2 Tim. I. 10.

— *And hath brought life and immortality to light,
thro' the gospel.*

BY life and immortality is meant in scripture, that immortal life which our Saviour hath brought to light, or given us assurance of by the revelation of the gospel. For tho' all men by the light of nature have some apprehensions of a future state, yet their reasonings about it, when left to themselves, are vain and uncertain, often very wild and extravagant. The best discourses of the heathens, and the wisest philosophers, about another life, were weak and obscure, doubtful and conjectural; nor even in the books of *Moses* and the prophets are there contained any plain, express promises of life eternal. The knowledge men had of it, was very dim and imperfect, till the sun of righteousness appeared, till God was pleased to send from that invisible world, his own most dear son to live and converse amongst men, in order fully to discover this unknown country, and to conduct us in the only true way to this everlasting happiness; an happiness too great for words to express, or our faculties to comprehend. And yet so much of it is clearly revealed in the gospel, as is abundantly sufficient to raise our thoughts, and excite our sincerest endeavours to obtain it.

By

Disc. CXXV. *The important concern, &c.* 243

By this plain revelation of a future state of immortality, is most illustriously manifested, the transcendant goodness and indulgence of our most merciful creator, in that he will graciously reward our imperfect services and mean performances, with glory so immense, *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive* the greatness of it. All we can do bears no proportion to such an ample recompence. Our best actions, so far from deserving to be rewarded, stand in need of a pardon. All possible duty and obedience is certainly due to the author of our being; and should God have exacted this from us, on account of his sovereign authority over us, as his creatures, we had been indispensably obliged to an absolute subjection to him; but that he should besides, promise to reward our faithful obedience with life eternal, is a most wonderful instance of his infinite grace and goodness. By this revelation of immortal life is farther demonstrated, the exceeding great love of our blessed Saviour, who by his death and perfect obedience not only purchased pardon for all our past sins, and redeemed us from eternal misery; (which of itself was an unspeakable mercy) but also merited and obtained for us an everlasting kingdom of glory, if we truly repent and return to our duty.

The infinite value and efficacy of what our Saviour has done for us, appears in this; that by his most powerful mediation, he procured not only our discharge from punishment, but also inexpressibly glorious rewards for us on most easy and reasonable terms. This is what especially recommends Christianity to us, in that it contains such glad tidings, and offers such mighty arguments to engage us to our duty, as no other religion could ever do. For since hope and fear are the great hinges of all government, the most prevailing passions of human nature;

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what more agreeable can be proposed to our hope, than to be for ever happy in body and soul? and what more dreadful to our fear than everlasting misery? The utmost that can be said to men, in order to reclaim them from sin, and oblige them conscientiously to observe God's laws, is, that God hath appointed a day, when he will call all men to an account for what they have done in this body; who will then reward the sincere faithful christian with immortal glory, but punish the disobedient and impenitent with everlasting vengeance. And if men will not regard such powerful considerations, nor be concerned or solicitous about their eternal happiness or misery; what other motives are likely to prevail, so as to make any impression on them? For what can be proposed to the reasons and understandings of men, of greater weight and moment, than what shall become of them in a future eternal state. It shall be therefore my present business to apply myself with all possible plainness and seriousness, to three sorts of persons. To such as seem to doubt of this fundamental doctrine of a future state. To those who profess to believe it but not heartily. And to such as do really and constantly believe it.

As to the sceptical disputers against religion, let us for once suppose, what they can never prove, that it is doubtful whether there will be another life after this; that all those notions of a judgment to come, a heaven, and hell, are meer fables, the inventions of crafty politicians and designing priests; and that all good and virtuous persons have been miserably deceived with vain hopes and fears, and given themselves needless trouble about religion: now granting all this, yet if we would act prudently and consult our own safety, nothing is more evident, than that we ought to believe and live, as if all these doctrines of religion were most certainly true; because every wise man would run as little hazard as possible, in a concern of so much conse-

consequence, and where a mistake must be fatal. Let such therefore consider, how little detrimental it will be to him, who believes and acts according to these principles, should they all at last prove false. And what extreme desperate hazard he runs, who doth not believe nor live according to them, should they happen to prove true.

He who believes and acts agreeably to these principles, should they prove false at last, only loses some present gratifications and enjoyments, which he denies himself. He indeed crosses the irregular inclinations of his nature, and avoids those excesses which are really hurtful to him ; he lives up to the dignity of his nature, is possessed with cares and fears about another world, which the atheist is not wholly free from. And strictly ties himself up to several rules and duties, and perhaps is exposed to some hardships, reproaches, and sufferings for the sake of religion ; which is the worst of his case. But then, he is at present blessed with a contented life, with peace of conscience, and the joyful expectation of an eternal reward hereafter ; and if in the right, he is made forever. Or should he be mistaken, his condition will however be no worse than other mortals. All the trouble and pains he was at about religion, will indeed be lost, but if his soul does not survive his body, he will never be sensible of it, nor can the disappointment be troublesome to him, when he goes where all things are forgotten. So that a virtuous religious man, may, for the generality, pass his days here more easily and comfortably than any wicked person, and please himself with the hopes or dreams of future glories ; and which if no other than meer fancy, will yet sufficiently recompense any self-denial it puts him upon. In short, if these things at last prove true, then he will be inexpressibly blessed, and happy ; or, should they be only false and vain hopes, and

that there is no other life after this, yet it will be as well with him as with the atheist, in this supposed state of eternal silence and insensibility. All the hazard he runs, is to lose some forbidden pleasures, which in most cases is best for him to be without, even as to this life. If the doctrine of a future state is false, yet he who lives religiously is safe; but if true, he is infinitely happy.

But let us now consider the extreme and desperate hazard which that man runs, who does not believe and act according to these principles, should they at last prove true; for then he ventures the loss of whatever is good and desirable, and of being forever miserable. Perhaps, nothing would sooner convince such men of their stupid folly, than sometimes to ask themselves, when calm and sober, a few such questions as these. What tho' I have endeavoured to persuade myself, that religion is no more than a melancholy dream, a political cheat, a common error; yet, should it be true at last, how dismal, and of what dreadful consequence will such a mistake be? what amazing, surprizing thoughts, fears, and despair, will attend me, if when my friends have closed my eyes, I should find myself immediately conveyed into the company of those spirits, which I had before derided, and into the presence of that God, whose existence I had impudently denied? What horror and confusion must it create, when my infidelity shall be confuted by such a woeful experiment, and I find myself suddenly carried to that endless state, which I would not here believe any thing of? Were the arguments on both sides equal, yet the hazards run are not so; since the one is the chance of being for ever happy, the other of being eternally miserable. Which one consideration fully justifies the discretion of a religious man, in renouncing and despising the glories and pleasures of this world, even tho'

tho' it was uncertain whether there is another life after this. But of what great madness must they be guilty, who reject this doctrine of another life, against many fair probabilities, good reasons, nay, certain demonstrations of its truth? When there is as great evidence in favour of it, as the nature of the thing will admit. When God hath most plainly revealed it from heaven; when this revelation is confirmed by all the signs and testimonies that we can reasonably expect and require; and when he hath implanted in the souls of men, such lively apprehensions of it, as that they must offer violence to their own minds, before they can force themselves to disbelieve it. For I verily think, was the most desperate sinner to labour and struggle ever so much, to subdue and extirpate this natural persuasion of another life, that yet after all his pains, he would not be able totally to remove the thoughts and fears of it.

I proceed now to reason with those, who tho' they profess to believe an immortal life, yet do it not really and heartily; and this I fear is the case of most Christians. But let me ask such these following questions: What is the reason that the promise of eternal life, so immense in itself, should so little influence men, and make their endeavours so faint and languid after it? Are any temporal things so valuable as the glories of heaven? or any evils here so dreadful as the miseries of hell? This none can pretend; because the good or evil of this life is of short continuance, but that of the next is durable and eternal. Or, why are Christians so cold and indifferent about the momentous concerns of another life, as if it was of no importance to them. This can be no otherwise accounted for, but that men do not heartily believe what they profess, or not duly consider it.

Most men, whatever they profess or pretend, or however they may deny it, are not sincerely persuaded of the certainty of a future state; their understandings not being rationally convinced of this truth, the belief of it is not firmly rooted in their minds. Indeed, was God to gratify the expectation of some men, and indulge us with the sight of these future glories and miseries which are revealed in the gospel, this might perhaps prevail to convince and reform mankind. Would he give us a view, (tho' but short and transient) of that blessed place where he ever lives, to behold for a few moments the perfect happiness of those blessed souls who are admitted into his beatific presence; or would he open the gates of hell, and permit us to look into that dismal receptacle of wicked spirits, to be eye and ear witnesses of their sad torments, despair and misery; such a sight perhaps might possibly reform and make us to be what God requires. *But God's ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts.* He governs us in a method suitable to our rational natures, and gives us such assurances of another life, as are abundantly sufficient to satisfy and convince men; but yet so, as that it may be resisted by those who resolve not to believe it. For if the rewards of religion had been present to our senses, there could have been no trial of men, no difference between the wise and considerate, and the foolishly wicked. God will not force a faith on us, but requires it as a matter of choice, an instance of our virtue. There is no faith in believing what we see; such believe not God, but their own eyes. *But blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believe.* The things unseen which God hath revealed, ought to have the same effect, as if the other world was visible to us. And as the principles of religion, which concern another life, are not things to be seen, we can only be assured

assured of them by proper arguments and testimonies, about which we must use our reason to judge the force of them, before we can be really convinced by them. Nor is this difficult; it only requires such serious attention of mind, to examine with care and diligence the evidences of a future state, as men commonly use in other affairs, when they would find out the truth. But the generality of professed Christians are so far from being convinced of the truth of religion by rational arguments, that very few of them ever enquire into the reasons of their belief. Their faith is solely owing to education, and the examples of others, or embraced without any consideration of the grounds and reasons of it. And then no wonder, if a faith thus received without any rational conviction, and so weakly founded, should have but little force or power on mens minds. This is not the faith which our Saviour requires, or that God will accept from those who are capable of acquiring a better. A *Mahometan* hath as good reason for believing the *Alcoran*, as such a Christian hath for the belief of Christianity. One great reason therefore of the inefficacy of mens faith, is, that their belief of the principles of religion was never well rooted and fixed in their understandings.

But if we are rationally convinced of these truths, and yet our belief is not effectual to reform our lives, the reason of this must be, that we do not really consider them. The understanding hath not such an absolute power over the will, as necessarily to determine it to what is best; for our wills may stubbornly refuse the clearest evidence and strongest reasons, if what is proposed be contrary to our fleshly and worldly lusts. As our will is moved by the understanding to obey its dictates, so is it also most importunately solicited by our appetites and lusts to gratify their several desires and

ptopenfities. Hence a great conflict often arifes between the truths of religion which are propofed by our underftandings, and fuch things as proceed from our inferior fenfitive faculties; our lufts being checked and croffed by the hopes and fears of another life, tempt us to deny the principles of religion, and with all their power ftrive to oppofe the entertainment of them in our minds. Thus it was with the *Jews* when our Saviour was on earth; they could not refift thofe undoubted testimonies which he gave, of his being the Son of God; but yet the love of this world, or fear of fufferings, fo far prevailed over their wills, as to prevent their becoming his difciples. Tho' "many of the chief rulers believed on him, yet becaufe of the Pharifees they did not confefs him, left they fhould be put out of the fynagogue. For they loved the praife of men more than the praife of God *." It is not therefore enough that the truths of religion fubdue our underftanding by the evidence of reafon, but they muft alfo conquer our will and affections, before they can have any lafting effect on our lives. Till our belief hath powerfully wrought on our love, hope and fear, it can have but little influence on our actions. The way to obtain this confent of our wills and affections to any truth propofed by our underftandings, is often moft ferioufly to confider the immense greatnefs of the happinefs afforded to us; the extremity of the mifery threatned; how dreadful our condition will be, if we carelefsly neglect to provide for it; and how infinitely the glory of heaven furpaffes all the pleasures of this life? If we represent and fix in our minds fuch things as thefe, it will by degrees fo captivate our wills and affections, as to make us regard and value this future happinefs as our greateft good, and to avoid eternal mifery as the greateft evil that can poffibly befall us. The concerns of eternity are of fuch infinite

finite moment, that if we do but patiently attend to, and freely think about them; if we will not suffer our lusts to bias our judgments, or stifle these principles of religion; they will at last awaken our conscience, and prevail above all temptations. And when our faith by frequent and serious consideration on these important concerns, hath conquered our minds and wills, then will our actions naturally follow. For men will live and act agreeably to what they love, desire, hope for, or fear. So effectually hath Christianity provided for the happiness of men, that nothing can make us miserable, but either not believing, or duly considering the great arguments of religion.

I beg leave to represent the different behaviour of men, as to our Saviour's promises concerning another life, by this plain similitude: suppose a person of great power and authority should make us this offer, that if we would follow him, and entirely resign ourselves to his government, he would safely conduct us to a certain country, where we should possess whatever our hearts could wish, be made kings and princes; enjoy all manner of health, riches, and honour, and every thing that could contribute to our pleasure and satisfaction; and who would give all the security any reasonable man could require, that what was thus promised, should be faithfully performed. But that some among us, not regarding the offer, nor any reasons or arguments he can urge, either thro' prejudice to his person, or dislike to the conditions, will yet reject him as a deceiver and impostor; such as these are the atheists and infidels. Others, tho' convinced that all this may be true, not having any just reason to doubt of it; yet they are so pleased with their present circumstances, as not to exchange them for such hopes. These are the fond lovers of this world. Others are willing to go to

this place, but they would fain live here as long as possible, and when they can stay no longer, are glad to be conveyed to this happy country. These are them who defer their repentance to a death-bed. But there are a few others, who entirely relying on this person's promises, and preferring them to all present enjoyments, do readily forsake their own concerns, and absolutely resign themselves to his direction; and if in their passage they meet with any dangers or difficulties, cross winds or storms; tho' this may fill them with doubts and fears, yet they resolve to proceed and venture all. These, and only these, are the true believers. When the consideration of another world is become our most prevailing interest, and the main principle that governs our lives, then is our faith true.

To pretend to believe this great doctrine of a future eternal state, and not to govern ourselves by this persuasion, is the worst folly which a reasonable creature can be guilty of. It was the observation of a great man, "that the strangest monster in nature was a speculative atheist, one who denies the being of a God and a future state, excepting one, and that was the practical atheist, who professed to believe both, but lived, as if he thought there was neither." Indeed the difference between them is not great; for as the *atheist* winks at, or rushes blindfold upon eternal ruin, so the *wicked believer* runs madly upon it, with both his eyes open.

All that remains, is, to address those who sincerely and constantly believe this great truth of another life, who not only assent to this doctrine with their understandings, but make this future happiness their ultimate concern. To these much need not be said; their faith alone will always teach them what to do. He who hath this eternal
state

state ever present to his mind, is fortified against all the temptations of this world, either as to the sufferings of this life, or the being enticed by any of its alluring charms and enjoyments. When the soul by faith views that place where his God and Saviour lives, how mean and contemptible, vile and sordid, will all things here below appear? Faith looks beyond this present scene of life; it beholds this world dissolved, all the glory and pomp of it vanishing; and this curtain being drawn, there appears a new world to his view, wherein are joys, pleasures, and honours, substantial and eternal; the prospect of which lessens his esteem for all things temporal. This faith will inspire and animate us with such courage and resolution, as to make us despise all difficulties and dangers, and to think eternal happiness to be a sufficient amends, for any pains or trouble to procure it. This conquers the love of life itself, which, tho' most deeply implanted in our natures, yet those who have been endued with this faith, have not *counted their lives dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy.* The exploits and achievements of faith, may be seen at large in the 11th chapter to the *Hebrews*, for the encouragement of all true believers. But yet far greater and more stupendous are the triumphs of faith, recorded of the holy lives and patient deaths of the blessed *apostles*, primitive *martyrs* and *confessors*, who with invincible constancy endured pains and torments, being only assisted by the grace of God, and a lively faith in his son Jesus. They rejoiced and sang praises in the midst of scorching flames, they *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods*, and gave God thanks, that *they were counted worthy to suffer for his name*; and doubtless God's grace with the like faith would produce in us the same effects, and enable us to do, or suffer any thing with the same joy and resolution. Such a faith will
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fill the soul with constant peace and satisfaction; so that a good man may delight himself with unseen pleasures, which the worldly man knows not any thing of: this makes him content with whatever is here allotted him, and to be very little concerned about the affairs of this life. He chiefly converses with invisible objects, and therein finds that solid and lasting comfort, which all things temporal can neither give nor take away. This faith cheers his spirits under all calamities and afflictions; and when wearied, or not pleased, with the impertinences of this life, he can entertain his mind with those ravishing joys that will never cloy nor satiate. This faith will arm a good man against the fear of death, and strip that *king of terrors* of all that is dreadful; who considers it only as God's messenger to knock off his fetters, to free him from an earthly prison, and to conduct him to a place of eternal bliss and happiness. All this and much more will a sincere and hearty faith effect; it will afford us a foretaste of this immortal happy state, give us in part an entrance into heaven, and at last the compleat enjoyment of it.

Let it then plainly appear by our words and actions, what our faith and hope is; and that *we walk by faith, not by sight*, or sense. Sense is a mean low principle, confined to this world, and can extend no farther, than to things present and visible. But the *just live by faith*; they govern their actions not by what they see, but by what they believe and hope for, looking beyond this life for such things as are eternal. Let us not be ashamed of this our design before men, but whatever they think of us, let us resolve to be for ever happy, and to use this world as if we were shortly to leave it; so to improve our time, as to remember it will soon be swallowed up in eternity. And blessed be God who hath set before us such mighty hopes,
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given us such glorious promises, made such a plain and clear revelation of this eternal life by Jesus Christ, and by him taught us the true way of obtaining it; who, having suffered for our sins in our nature, entered into the highest heavens, to prepare mansions of glory for all his faithful followers.

DISCOURSE CXXVI. *Stanhope.*

Of preparation for death and judgment.

Mat. 24. 44.

Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh.

IN these words our Saviour represents to us, a thing of the highest and most general importance, the last great revolution, that terrible day of the Lord, which the persons to whom he spake, and all Christians after them, were obliged daily and hourly to expect, and diligently prepare for: he therefore expresses himself in such terms as might awaken their souls and quicken their care, by declaring it not only certain, but nigh at hand to every one of them. Several remarkable dispensations of an avenging providence, had been exhibited to the preceding ages of the world, which were intimations abundantly sufficient, that God would not fail to execute judgment upon sinners. These ought to have made men wary, and prevailed on them to live as becomes those, who know they must
render

render an account of all their actions. But notwithstanding so many repeated instances of a severe reckoning, our Lord foresaw that there would be vast numbers unmoved and unprepared, insomuch that the son of man's coming should not more resemble the flood which drowned the world, in the horror and universal extent of the judgment, than it would in the surprize and indisposition of men to meet him; just such another sweeping deluge shall this prove, as swift, as fatal, as astonishing to all, who are not ready for the sudden and amazing appearance. "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour the Lord doth come." And because we ought to be much ashamed, that "the children of this world should be so much wiser than the children of light;" the example of a careful householder is propounded, as a fresh incentive to our diligence. For the son of man's coming, as to its suddenness, and our unpreparedness, is compared to that of a thief in a night; and if he ought to watch to secure his house from being broke open, and the loss of such goods, which yet time and providence might again restore; how much more should we be upon our guard, whose treasure and danger are infinitely greater, and whose loss, if once sustained, is for ever irreparable? *Therefore be ye also ready, for as at a time when that householder is not aware, the thief rushes in upon him; so in such an hour as you think not, the son of man cometh.* — That I may discourse on these words in the most useful manner, I will propose some observations, which will lead us to a right apprehension of the suddenness of the son of man's coming; and then lay down some directions how to prepare ourselves for that solemn event.

And here I cannot but take notice, that the *son of man's coming*, whatever that expression means, is not attempted to be proved, but only spoken of

as an incontestable truth, sufficiently known. Indeed the manner of his pompous appearance is sufficiently described; the suddenness of it, and the improvidence of the world, are particularly foretold; many importunate exhortations to prepare our souls for it, are very movingly insisted upon; and the end of his coming, both in this and the next chapter, is declared to be the taking an account of his servants, examining how each had acquitted themselves in their respective trusts and capacities, and awarding to every one his deserved portion and recompence. From all which it is exceeding evident, that the last general judgment is meant by it, when "all men shall give account for their own works, and they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire." But there are no pains taken to prove that a judgment should be, because this was before an established notorious principle, and none were so bold as to call it publicly in question; or so ignorant, as to admit any doubt of it.

But tho' by the coming of the son of man, the general judgment be principally intended, yet the day of our death may also be very justly termed the coming of our Lord; this being to every man in particular, what the last judgment will be to the whole world in general. The suddenness of its coming may be the same; and the state of our souls and the danger of being unprovided must be the same; for these two have a near connection, and absolute dependance upon one another. "By the day of the Lord, says St. *Jerome*, we understand the day of every particular man's departure out of the body. For what shall be done in the day of judgment to all, the same is fulfilled, as to each single person, in the day of his death." With this father agree the generality of ancient interpreters, and for the same reason. So little were these good men sensible

sible of a middle state, for the purging mens souls by fire, or any method of putting those into a capacity for heaven, who were not so when they died.

And it is worthy observation, that tho' both these *comings of the son of man*, be here intended, yet that only of the last judgment is mentioned, and for good reason; because this being the last solemn appearance of quick and dead, attended with all the terror and pomp, which we find described in scripture; it would naturally work mens minds up to a becoming sense, and suitable apprehension of their danger. Whereas death, by the commonness of it, is made familiar to us, tho' in reason it ought to move us the more; and therefore this would have been mentioned, as we find it discoursed on every day, without any great concern or impression. To which may be added, that was it not for the great audit before God's tribunal, there could be no reason given, why we should be any way solicitous to prepare for death: for what is death considered in itself, but only a dissolution of soul and body; a state of darkness and oblivion; a fate common to all creatures under the sun? and so not worth the least part of our care and concern, otherwise, than as it leads and consigns us over directly to that general assize. For this reason we certainly lie under the strictest engagements to work, while this short day of life continues; because our sun draws toward setting, and the night comes on a pace, wherein no man can work; and there is no device nor knowledge, no repentance, no reformation, no improvement of ourselves in the grave, whither we are all going. From these considerations, the substance of my text, seems to be this: "That it is the duty of every Christian, as he values the safety of his soul, to bear constantly in mind, and make good provision against the second coming of our

our Lord ; whether that be the last great judgment, or which will be the same to him, the time of his own death ; since this is but a preface to that judgment, and only detains him bound in fetters of sleep and earth, till the almighty judge shall unlock our close dark prison, and summons us all to our trial." For the coming of the son of man, in both these senses is sure, and therefore it concerns every one to be ready ; especially, if we consider the hazard, or probability of his coming in such an hour as we think not. This brings me to consider, the suddenness of the son of man's coming.

An accident is reputed sudden, either with regard to the time when, or the persons to whom it happens ; either when it comes immediately without any notice beforehand, or when it overtakes men unawares, at a season they least think of. As to the former of these, the Son of man's coming cannot be sudden ; for if by his coming we mean the general judgment, who can pretend that this is brought upon the world, without sufficient notice ? Did not the prophet *Daniel* proclaim aloud, " that they who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," So that before the light of the gospel appeared, there were abundant intimations given, that the Almighty would arise to judgment, and reward every man according to his work. But we have also the express testimony of our blessed Lord and his apostles. That very Son, " to whom the father hath committed all judgment," tells us, " that he will come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him ; that he will sit on his throne, and all nations shall be gathered before him †." And *St. Paul* assures us, " that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according

† John 5. 22.

cording to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad *.” For God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” And *St. Peter* tells us, “that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ‖.” If we add to these testimonies of scripture, the dictates, the applauses and reproaches of conscience; if we reflect on the reasonableness and necessity of such a thing, in order to the public vindication of divine justice, and the perfectly clearing up the dark and mysterious methods of providence, which seem to distribute so unequally the good and evil things of this life; these will appear so many evident invincible proofs of a future judgment; and therefore God hath not been wanting, either to inform us that it shall be, or to warn and fortify us against it.

But if by the son of man’s coming, be understood our own death, alas! where do we not meet with fresh remembrances of that? and which God hath ordained as a necessary introduction to the other. “For it is appointed unto men one to die, and after that, the judgment ‡.” Besides, every thing we see, or hear, or know, turns our monitor; and we must be blind and deaf not to be sensible, and perfectly stupid not to apprehend and consider it. Every dying year, every declining day, every drooping flower and falling leaf, are so many emblems of our certain mortality. Nay, the continual change of our own bodies, makes the unwelcome application for us. Since in despite of all the vain flatteries, and perverse reasoning of flesh and blood to the contrary; the unsteady condition of human nature, is a most sensible, an ever-present argument, that as

* 2 Cor. 5. 10. Acts 17. 31. ‖ 2 Pet. 3. 10.

‡ Heb. 9. 27.

man comes up like a flower, so he must some way or other be cut down like it too. If he escapes the rude assaults of sad untimely accidents; if sickness doth not blast him in the bud; yet the flower decays, age will wither his beauty, and make his strength stoop down to his native earth again. "Thus man dieth and wasteth away, he lieth down, and riseth not, till the heavens be no more *."

The same common nature is imparted to all men and all are liable to the same dangers and infirmities. Neither youth nor vigour, neither piety, nor power, is a sufficient defence against this fatal blow. If any human excellence could get above it; if the most zealous prayers, and united wishes of good people could suspend it; we should not have so many afflicting instances, that not any, not even the greatest, not even the best, can have any pretence to think themselves exempted from a destiny, which is inflicted without distinction, upon persons of all ages, of all degrees and conditions. For the last groans and agonies of departing souls, the sad solemnities of funerals, the dejected looks, and melancholy mourning of surviving friends; and the still more melting sighs and tears of poor widows and fatherless, deprived of their best comfort and support; these are objects in every time, and every place, that constantly present themselves to our view. How then shall we call that coming of our Lord sudden, for want of sufficient notice; which we are so many ways continually reminded of, that without offering the greatest violence to our reason and our senses, it is impossible for us not daily to apprehend and expect?

But an accident is sometimes sudden, as well in regard of the persons, as of the times when it happens. This is an observation that never met with so many experimental proofs in any one instance, as
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in the case before us. For 'it would really amaze us, to reflect how the generality of the world behave on this occasion; and how little they provide for their Lord's coming, in either of the before-mentioned respects. They commonly profess to believe a future judgment, with the highest degree of assurance that is possible. They frequently meditate upon the certainty of death, and the shortness of the time, permitted us here upon earth. They pretend to be sensible, that on this fleeting moment depends an eternity of bliss or woe. That their immortal souls, and all that is valuable, lie at stake; and that they must be dealt with hereafter, as this little span of life is now improved. And yet, as if they had made a covenant with death, and were in league with hell, their conversations demonstrate a quite contrary persuasion; their affections and desires fix and determine here below. And by a strange sort of unthinking perverseness, the perishing trifles of this world wholly possess them; while the main end and business of their creation, the concerns of a future and better state, which are only worth our consideration, are scarce allowed any place in our thoughts and memories.—Having already observed the dangerous folly of this wretched negligence, I will proceed to lay down some directions, how we may escape the condemnation of such careless men; and what course we must take, to be ready to meet our Lord at his coming. But I shall insist only on such rules as are most necessary.

And there are some vices which must be declined and some positive duties which are to be observed. The vices to be avoided, are sensuality and love of the world. Against these our Lord gives this caution: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that

day come upon you unawares*.” The natural and unavoidable consequence of these vices is, that they are a very great hindrance to a Christian preparation for death and judgment. Sensuality, here expressed by surfeiting and drunkenness, means, not only those two sins, but all the sad effects of gluttony and intemperance, and the many vile lusts which follow from thence. For the indulging an habitual practice of these vices, discomposes the inward, as well as distempers and destroys the outward man. Hence men’s love of God, and esteem for goodness, grow faint and cold; their inclinations and desires are perfectly changed and corrupted; they lose all relish of true satisfaction, and can no longer taste any thing that is rational, heavenly and pure. Thus while they are satiated with carnal delights, they become listless, heavy and unactive; degenerate into sense and flesh, unbecoming men and Christians; and at last utterly sink into spiritual stupidity and sloth. All this proceeds from the intimate union between soul and body, and the opposition there is between these two in concerns of religion. A religious sobriety keeps men awake and active; admits of thoughts so necessary as death and judgment, knowing that thereon depends the bliss for which immortal spirits were designed. A sensual man has only his intervals of thought, and even then there is such a bias upon his judgment, that it is exceedingly difficult to raise him to any tolerable estimate of heaven and intellectual joys. But mortification and temperance leave us free and unprejudiced, and give our reason room to exert itself. They inspire a generous disdain of all earthly enjoyments, and dispose us to thirst after future and better state.

Another thing our Saviour advises his disciples against, is the love of the world. “Take heed that

* Luke 21. 34.

that ye be not overcharged with the cares of this life ; " not that we should so entirely mind the next life, as to make no provision for a convenient subsistence in this ; but he blames such degrees of anxiety, as imply a distrust of providence, which ill suits a Christian's faith. He condemns that criminal excess of care which disorders men in their duty, and takes off their minds from their own mortality, and a regard for another world. The service of God and mammon are inconsistent things ; it being impossible that we should at one and the same time, be extremely solicitous for this world's goods ; and yet " to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness," with any becoming degree of zeal and affection. These temporal cares and concerns are the most dangerous snares that can attend a man. For if he be poor and struggling hard for a competency, then they perplex and distract him ; they fill him with innumerable despondencies, and expose him to all the base arts of unjust gain. If he be rich, and a desire of encreasing wealth occasions it, nothing can be more directly opposite to the duty of preparation, mentioned in the text. For abundance of success commonly inflame those desires, and render the mind more sordid and abject ; they fasten the soul down to the vanities of this world, and will not suffer it to soar up to another ; and above all, they render the thoughts of death, and of leaving these beloved treasures, a most tormenting consideration. So that in all respects this immoderate solicitude is irreconcilable with a Christian's being ready to meet his Lord. For the indigent man has no leisure to provide for his coming, and the rich man cannot endure to think of it. — To these two evils before observed, our Lord opposes, as many positive virtues, to assist and enable us to prepare for his approach.

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The one is watchfulness, or frequent meditations upon, and a continual regard to that most important day. The having our loins girt, and our light burning; and weaning our affections from all such pleasures, as may detain and divert us in our Christian course. It also denotes an exemplary piety, a graceful behaviour, and extraordinary diligence in our callings; a conscientious discharging the post we are appointed to, and answering all that can be expected from us in our respective stations and capacities. And because our task is difficult, and our avocations many; our enemies strong, and we of ourselves but very weak; we are farther commanded to be frequent and diligent in applying for help and strength to him, who alone can, and in his due time will deliver us. "Take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man||." Our own endeavours will do something; and men might do much more than they think they can do, would they set about it in good earnest. But still we ought not to rely on our own strength and diligence; for the very best of us all, is not always upon his guard, but will frequently find himself surprized, and hath therefore abundant occasion to pray, that he may be forgiven his infirmities and inadvertencies, and enabled to stand faster for the future. Especially to entreat and implore, with all possible earnestness and holy passion, that in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, the good Lord will deliver him; that this last mighty change, upon which the whole of our future fate depends, may not find us idle or unprovided, but awake and busy, and our lamps lighted and trimmed; that when the bridegroom appears, we may have nothing to do, but to enter

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with

|| Mark 13. 33. Luke 21. 36.

with him to the marriage. I now proceed to draw a few inferences from what has been said.

And we have here a fair occasion given us, of contemplating the exceeding wisdom and justice of our universal judge. His wisdom is eminently seen in giving men proper notice to prepare for it; and this vindicates his justice in punishing those, who notwithstanding will live unprepared. Tho' he will certainly come, both with respect to death and judgment, yet as to the precise time of either of these, that is utterly uncertain. And this is the strongest argument for our care and circumspection. For, had that critical minute been revealed to every person, this would have encouraged licentiousness and security. The corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood, would have persuaded men, that they might safely indulge the beginning of their days, and this would have given countenance to a late reformation and death-bed repentance. As the case now is, we see how apt men are to run these hazards; and we may reasonably presume, they would have been more bold in venturing their souls had it been otherwise. But as it is, there can be no just excuse for such a wicked neglect. For the circumstance of its being accidental, does not alter the reality and certainty of the thing. The promises and appointments of God are unchangeable. Where eternal truth stands engaged, the thing subsists, and shall certainly be brought to pass. Come he will; but whether in *the first, the second, the third, or the fourth watch* * we know not. And for this reason we ought to be extremely watchful, and always upon our guard. Death and judgment may overtake our infancy; or they may snatch us away in the heat and bloom of youth; or they may crush our riper and more confirmed years; so that health and vigour will justify no man's being unprovided.

But

* Mark 13. 35.

But if they should delay till the fourth watch, when old age and grey hairs overtake us; yet this does not prove that they might not have come sooner, or that they will not come at all. For tho' it tarry yet wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry *."

What has been said may serve for a just reproof to the unreasonableness and vanity of such men, as are eternally bewailing the shortness of life, and complaining that God deals hardly with mankind, in allowing them no longer a space for working out their salvation. But let no man deceive you with vain words; Almighty God is a fair and bountiful master; he affords every one opportunities sufficient for the work he is to do. The true Christian way of computation is, to measure life by the improvements made of it, rather than by any term or number of years. He that dies old in virtue, can never be so young as to die untimely; and he that is a stranger to this, tho' he should equal the years of *Methuselah*, yet as to right living, he is still an infant. If men will trifle away their precious hours, when they are so often told how much depends upon them, it is their own fault. The shortest life is long enough to bring a diligent and careful man to heaven; and to the idle, the sensual and secure, the longest would be as much too short, as the space now afforded them.

Lastly, from what has been observed, it also appears, with what prudence and piety the church of *England* teaches all her children, to deprecate the misery and judgment of a sudden death. Sudden I mean, in respect of itself? without any previous sickness, or other awakening significations of our last great call. Indeed, not knowing when *the Lord doth come*, we should expect him every hour. The most sudden death will be no excuse to them who

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neglect

* Habak. 2. 3.

neglect it. But yet we have great reason to wish and to pray, that so important a change may approach with something of warning and solemnity. The best of us all, after the nicest preparations, will find employment enough for his last hours; and I am apt to believe it very difficult, even for good men, in their health and vigour, to bring themselves into so serious a frame of mind, with regard to the next world, as if they saw themselves just upon the brink of it. A new scene of things and thoughts then opens; such as kindles a zeal sometimes where it was not before, and makes it burn brighter where it was. And we often see such glad foretastes of bliss, as abundantly compensates the bodily pains, and makes every good man's *bed in his sickness*. Besides, to be assisted with the advice of our spiritual guides, to be strengthened with the sacrament and seal of our redemption, to be recommended by the intercessions of our pious friends; these are mighty comforts and advantages. So that a lingering disease, which usually passes for a great affliction, is in this respect a great blessing. For while death makes regular and leisurely advances, he deals with us like a fair enemy, calls aloud to the field, and bids us make ready for the combat. But to be hurried away to eternity in a moment, to have body and soul torn asunder at one stroke, without one minute to take leave, or to say *Lord have mercy upon me*, at the last gasp! surely this must be a dreadful thing to every considering Christian. We will then wish and pray earnestly, that God will not deal so with us. But since he may use this, as well as any other method of calling us to himself; it will be our greatest concern to take care, that the most sudden death may not be sudden in respect of us. But that we be always watchful and upon our guard, ready and pre-

Disc. CXXVII. *Of future rewards, &c.* 269
prepared, and more especially so, because “ in
such an hour as we think not, the Son of man
cometh.”

DISCOURSE CXXVII. *Rogers.*

Of future rewards and punishments.

Gal. 6. 7.

*Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For whatsoever a
man soweth, that shall he reap.*

THE mind of man, however polluted, seems
to have a natural desire after future as well as
present happiness. Upon reflection, he finds in
himself a consciousness of his own immortality, and
a concern for his allotment in that state which is
eternal. And as one of the first conclusions of na-
tural reason, is, that all the happiness or misery of
man depends on the favour or displeasure of that
supreme being who made and governs the world ;
so his conscience is perpetually reminding him to
secure an interest in God's favour, by such actions
as are agreeable to his will, and to prevent his dis-
pleasure, by avoiding whatever is offensive to him.
Even in a state of nature, where there was but an
obscure and imperfect notion of God, yet the serious
part of mankind always endeavoured to entitle
themselves to the divine favour, by those obser-
vances which they thought acceptable to him. But
still the strong propensity of our nature to evil,

the prepossessions of lust, the near and tempting satisfactions with which vice and immorality solicit our corruption, inclined men to hearken to every expedient that proposed to reconcile their duty with these gratifications, and secure to them the present pleasures of vice, without a forfeiture of the rewards of virtue. Indeed, while men had only a conjectural knowledge of the will of God, and the expectations of futurity, no wonder if they were persuaded to believe that man might sin, and yet live; that God was either not offended with their transgressions, or too merciful to resent them in eternal inflictions, and those times of ignorance in which they lived, afforded some excuse for them. But now when God under the gospel has plainly and expressly declared his will; when he has clearly revealed the terms of our happiness; for men any longer to delude themselves with false and unwarrantable expectations, and to presume on less performances of our duty, than what he has commanded; this is a weakness which admits of no excuse, a crime that implies no less than mocking of God. It is disputing his veracity, justice, or authority, and prescribing to him the condition of his own favour; and what no one could hardly imagine, that a rational creature, intent upon happiness, could be guilty of. And yet notwithstanding God has positively assured us, that he only who doth righteousness shall be happy, and that he who commiteth and persists in sin, shall be damned; yet still we are for finding out some evasion to reconcile our lusts and vices to our expectations of happiness.

These words of the apostle are designed to obviate one of the most dangerous delusions of this kind, namely, that either there will be no such strict and accurate review of mens actions, or that God will be at last more favourable than he has threatned, and make larger allowances than he has promised,

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by assuring us that the day will come, when every moment of our lives will be reviewed by God, and that none of our frivolous excuses will divert his judgment in that day ; but he will impartially execute judgment, and render to every man according to his deeds ; and without any respect of persons, proceed invariably by the rules he has laid down. Those who have sinned without law, shall perish without law ; and those who have sinned under the law, shall be judged by the law. According as God's law was known to them, their obedience shall be exacted, and their eternal immutable state decreed, in proportion to our observance or neglect of it. — I shall therefore endeavour to confirm this important doctrine, that *whatsoever we sow, that shall we also reap*. I will then prove, that this law is agreeable to God's justice, consistent with his mercy, and is what we must expect he will enforce.

That God will impartially render to every man according to his works, is a conclusion which natural reason may deduce from a due consideration of the attributes and perfections of God. For if God be the governor and judge of the world, which is implied in the very notion of God, he cannot but observe the behaviour of his subjects ; and if he be infinitely just, he must some time or other impartially distribute justice, and distinguish the good from the bad, by different allotments of rewards and punishments ; nay, the very heathens, from the visible inequality wherewith happiness and misery were dispensed in this life, inferred a future state, in which the divine justice would set all these irregularities right, and put an exemplary difference between virtue and vice. Indeed, the light of natural reason concerning these truths, did only amount to fair probabilities ; but could not with any assurance determine what God would do, till

he revealed his will to mankind, and laid open the whole scheme of his providence in the gospel; in which is contained the counsels and resolutions of God. And our Saviour in all the representations he has given us of his last coming to judge the world, has positively declared, that he will pronounce an impartial and irreverfible sentence on all the actions of men. He assures us, that no particular instances of obedience, not the owning his authority, nor zeal for his honour, will be an equivalent for the omission of any part of our duty. Even those who have cast out devils in his name, and done many wonderful works, if they neglect their duty, they must expect this sentence, “I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity.” And this will be irreverfible; for the wicked “shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal †. — “We must all receive the things done in our body, according to what we have done, whether it be good, or whether it be bad.—He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting *.”

This view is the great principle and foundation of Christian obedience, and remove the certainty of this prospect, the gospel will have no sufficient motive, to recommend it to the choice and practice of men. For “if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” Tho’ we may properly argue against the excesses of vice, from the temporal inconveniences attending it; yet we may be temperate even in vice, and avoid those inconveniencies. We are not forbidden the excess only, but the most moderate use of an unlawful pleasure. The prospect of a future retribution, is the sole motive capable of determining the actions of a rational being, from a consciousness of immortality.

† Mat. 25. 46. * Gal. 6. 8.

talities. This is what the wisdom of God has thought fit to apply to the hopes and fears of men, as the sanctions of his laws. The threats and promises made use of, are agreeable to his justice, consistent with his mercy; and the execution of them, is therefore what we must expect from him; which brings me to prove that this proceeding of God is agreeable to divine justice.

As God's perfections necessarily imply a sovereign dominion over his creatures, and which consists in an authority to prescribe laws, and to require an exact obedience from them; so it is necessary that these divine laws should be enforced with such penalties and rewards as may be sufficient to engage the observance of rational creatures. These, as being future and eternal, God has expressly revealed to our hopes and fears in the gospel; and he having obliged himself to the performance, his justice is strictly obliged to execute them. Infinite wisdom from all eternity, weighed and considered every possible circumstance of the actions of men, and therefore nothing new can possibly intervene, to make it just or necessary for him to change his resolutions.——And as an impartial execution of the divine laws is agreeable to God's justice, so is it abundantly consistent with his mercy.

Tho' we cannot account for the actions of God, "whose ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts;" yet we may be assured, that in every action there is an exact harmony and concurrence of all his attributes. For tho' his laws are the more immediate expressions of his wisdom, justice and authority; yet his infinite goodness and mercy were equally consulted in enacting them. And to convince ourselves of the consistency of his justice, with his goodness and mercy, let us farther reflect on the easiness of those performances, by which we may attain the proposed reward, and

avoid the punishment threatened to disobedience. Had God proposed terms of his favour, above our abilities to perform, we might then with some reason complain, that his laws were barbarous and cruel. But how great soever the penalties are which he threatens to the breach of his laws, yet if the observing them are both easy and agreeable to nature, and generally consistent even with our present interest, no one ought to complain of any hardship in the law, or any unreasonable severity in the author. And what is there in all the ordinary duties of Christianity which exceeds the common abilities of men to perform? How few are the instances, in which it is not our temporal interest to comply with them? Has God proposed any truth to our faith, without sufficient arguments to induce our assent? or, has he enjoined the practice of any duty, which wise and good men in all ages have not recommended, even from some immediate advantages attending it? nay, the severest duties of religion, have the present encouragement of a satisfied conscience, and a joyful assurance of being rewarded with a distinguished share of glory. These are supports which can with delight reconcile us to the greatest distresses of obedience; that can make the confessor triumph in bonds, and the martyr in flames.

But as a further argument of the divine compassion to our weakness, God has provided us with a ready and effectual assistance by the graces of his holy spirit, which can make us equal, nay, superior to all the difficulties of obedience. So that after all our objections and complaints, we must acknowledge, "that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works;" that as is his majesty, so is his mercy. He requires no more from us, than our own capacity, with the assistance of his grace, will enable us to perform; and
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when we fall short of the strictness of his laws, he has compassion on our infirmities, and allows us to reinstate ourselves again in his favour by repentance. And these are terms of happiness so easy, so just and reasonable, so agreeable to the goodness and compassion of God, that no punishment can be too severe for those who refuse to comply with them. How then can we expect to escape, if we neglect so great a salvation, so easily to be obtained?

Since then the laws of God are enacted with so much justice, and yet tempered with so much mercy, we have the greatest reason to expect, that he will invariably execute that sentence which he has pronounced, “that whatsoever we sow, that shall we reap. — God is not a man that he should lye, or as the son of man that he should repent. Hath he spoken, and shall he not perform it?” As God has plainly and clearly revealed this prospect to men, we cannot without reflecting on his truth and sincerity, suppose he will change his decree, or contradict his express declarations. Since then God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness: Let us not amuse ourselves with vain persuasions, that he will remit any of the punishments threatened, or act with more indulgence to sin than he has promised. God hath set open the gate of life, and invited us to enter in. He has plainly directed us in the way that leads to it, and offers us the assistance of his spirit in all our difficulties; and if we miscarry under so many helps and advantages, our blood must be upon our head, and we must blame only ourselves for our damnation.

But since some men delude themselves with vain expectations, inconsistent with this doctrine, thinking to soften the terms of salvation, and reconcile the justice of God to their vices; it may be proper to consider some of their pleas and pretences in fa-

vour of sin; and the first that occurs, is, that treacherous doctrine of the church of *Rome*, of pardons and indulgencies for the living, and masses for the dead; and no wonder that so pleasing a scheme of religion should be so easily and readily received. A scheme which gratifies the lusts, the idleness, and security of men, and gives them confidence in their expectations of futurity; by persuading them, that God may be rendered favourable to them, and all the terrors of his justice be appeased, without any labour or application of their own. That their salvation may be secured by the imputed services, and purchased intercessions of others. But has not God decreed, “that the soul which sinneth, that shall die?” and who can reverse that unalterable decree? nor can any one do more than his duty. After we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, and must at last owe our own salvation to his mercy and compassion. Alas! who is that creature that can plead purity before that God, who charges his “angels with folly, and in whose sight the angels are not clean? what is man then that he should be clean? or, he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?” even the righteous shall scarcely be saved, and they are saved, not by works, or a perfect unflinching obedience, but by the grace of God in Christ; by the mercies and forgiveness of the gospel covenant. But supposing that any one can do more than God has required, or than heaven can reward, (which is impossible) yet how can this overplus of merit be demised over to another? This is indeed a gainful, and no doubt, to the sinner, an acceptable doctrine; but then it is without the least foundation in scripture.

Equally groundless is the pretended efficacy of masses for the departed sinner, no instance of which can be produced from scripture. Indeed, they re-
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fer us to some passages in the apocriphal writings, which seem to countenance such a practice; but then these books have for good reasons been rejected from the canon of scripture, even by the Jews, who were the best judges, and therefore no authority from thence is conclusive. And if the truth of the history be allowed, all that can be inferred, is, that there was a corrupt practice crept into the Jewish church, for which they had no warrant from the law or the prophets.

Besides these superstitions of the church of *Rome*, some who have reformed from them, have fell into opinions equally dangerous to religion, and inconsistent with the doctrine of the apostle. I mean such as ascribe our justification to a mere speculative act of faith, exclusive of all regard to our works. But the true extent of the doctrine of justification by faith, is this; that since it is not possible for us exactly to fulfil the law of works prescribed to us, God, out of compassion to our infirmities, made a new covenant with us in his son, by which he has promised to accept of repentance instead of innocence, and to admit of our sincerity, tho' it be short of perfection. The merits and satisfaction of Christ will atone for our failings, and faith in his blood supply all unavoidable defects in our obedience. But tho' no one can glory in works, and claim salvation as due to them, because no one can exactly perform his duty, without some imperfection; yet still we are obliged to do all we are able: nor will our faith in Christ, or the covenant of the gospel any farther avail us, than as it will atone for the imperfection of our service, and render that great work of our repentance effectual to salvation.

Another error like this, and equally inconsistent, is the doctrine of absolute irrespective predestination; which supposes, that God by a partial decree,

cree, has resolved the salvation of some particular persons, and the destruction of others, let them live or act as they please: an opinion, which equally tends to discountenance piety, and encourage profaneness; because, it proposes one event to the righteous and the wicked, independent of our own actions; and which neither the prayers of the devout, nor the tears of the penitent can change. — But how can we possibly reconcile this partial doctrine, with that strict justice God has declared he will execute in the last day? or, with what consistency can he be said to judge the world in righteousness, and reward every man according to his works; who by a meer arbitrary decision, without any regard to their lives and actions, shall adjudge one to eternal happiness, and another to eternal misery. That the prescience of God implies an exact foreknowledge both of his own and our actions, and consequently a foresight, or pre-determination of the final allotments of men, is certain. But we cannot conceive this to be consistent with the divine justice, unless we suppose, that God from all eternity determined the final state of man, because from all eternity he knew how they would determine their own free and voluntary choice of good and evil; whether they would comply with, or refuse the offers of his grace? whether they would serve, or disobey God?

But none can from hence encourage himself to hope for mercy while he continues in sin; because, the only reason we can have to think that we are entitled thereto, is the conformity of our lives to the law of God. “He who doth righteousness is of God, and he who commiteth sin is of the devil.” We have no other mark or criterion but what will deceive us; so that tho’ this doctrine of irrelative predestination, may probably endanger the salvation of men, while it suggests despair to the penitent,

tent, and presumption to the sinner; yet it can never be applied to the consolation of any, or supply us with any other motive for our confidence towards God, than what must arise from the reflection of our own good works, since from them only can our election be judged of.

But there is another delusion of equal danger, and of more extensive influence, not chargeable upon any particular sect of Christians, but which we must all lament as an effect of our corruption, and a melancholy instance of the fondness of our nature for sin; namely, a persuasion that God is too merciful to condemn a man eternally, for a transitory offence. An error unhappily countenanced by some great names, and very suitable to the proneness of man's nature, which is apt to embrace every project that promises reconciliation with his vice. The mercy and goodness of God, is a subject that employs our thoughts and hopes with the greatest pleasure. It is a speculation that soothes our fears and speaks peace to our souls; and therefore no wonder, if we indulge our reflections on the deity, as the object of our love, as the kind benevolent author and contriver of our happiness. But then it is with the utmost regret and reluctance that we can change the prospect, and turn our views to the terrors of his justice; to consider him as armed with the severity of a judge, and the impartial avenger of all transgressions of his laws: and yet we must take care, that while we magnify his mercy we do not forget his justice. All God's attributes are equally infinite, equally essential, and ought to be conceived by us, in a manner consistent one with another.

It may perhaps seem too severe, that God should condemn a mortal frail creature, for complying with a passion, in which his own happiness is no more affected, than it is promoted by our best services;

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or, that an eternal punishment should be inflicted for a temporal crime. But God judgeth not according to man's judgment. He who is infinite in knowledge, hath declared, death eternal to be the wages of unrepented sin ; and since the reward promised to a temporal obedience is eternal happiness, it is but just and equitable, that the punishment of our contempt should bear a proportion to it. The degrees of guilt are to be estimated, not only from the nature of the offender, but also from the nature of the person offended. How inconceivable then must the guilt of offending man be, whose sins are a defiance of the almighty Lord of heaven and earth, an affront to that goodness to whom he owes his life, breath, and all things ; and who has engaged his obedience by the greatest tenderness of love, the most endearing instances of bounty and compassion ? dare we then presume to say there is injustice in the most high ; or that the punishment threatened to our sins, are greater than they deserve ?

Let us then reflect, that we are poor dependent creatures, in the hands of an almighty creator. Let us remember, that we have forfeited all claim or right to happiness, by breaking the conditions of it ; and since God has denounced eternal misery to those who violate his laws, it is our duty to acquiesce in the sentence. God has not been wanting in his tenderness to the sons of men. He has prescribed a righteous law to our observance, and furnished us with capacities to obey it ; and he has given us a Saviour, the sacrifice of whose blood will atone for our failings and infirmities. He offers to support our weakness by the assistance of his spirit, and permits us to retrieve our miscarriages by repentance ; and that nothing might be omitted to encourage us in our duty, he has engaged our obedience by promises of the greatest reward that can be proposed

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to intelligent immortal beings. And can the obstinate sinner, who despises so much goodness, be used with too much severity? or, is it unjust and unmerciful, that he who rejects so compassionate a proposal of salvation, should suffer the vengeance of a God, so slighted and abused? God consulted infinite mercy and infinite justice in making his laws: every argument for compassion was then weighed and considered; and God will impartially act by the rule he has established. “Whatsoever we sow, that shall we also reap.——He that by patient continuance in well doing, waits for glory and honour, immortality and eternal life; but tribulation and anguish shall be on every soul of man that doth evil.”

If then God will be thus strictly impartial, and that every disobedience of men will receive a rigorous allotment of punishment from the divine justice; “what manner of men ought we to be, in all holiness and godly conversation?” with what fear and trembling should we strive to work out our salvation, and make our calling and election sure? how should it awaken and astonish the security of every sinner, to reflect that every offence he commits will be revenged by a just and almighty God! That a constant register is kept of all his miscarriages, which in the great day of accounts will be produced; when he will receive an irreversible sentence from the righteous judge of heaven and earth. It may perhaps seem too rigorous that the supreme happiness of man should depend on so exact a performance of God’s laws. But salvation is the gift of God, which he may bestow on what terms he pleases; nor are the conditions so hard, as our laziness would represent them; but are with so much justice and compassion suited to our abilities, that it is our own fault if we miscarry. But if we will foolishly neglect the means, and delude ourselves

selves with fond presumptions on the unrevealed mercy of God, we must be content to abide the consequence. Let none therefore be deceived with those weak pretences, which seem to widen the gate of life, and soften the terms of salvation. But let us with the utmost vigour and resolution, press forward in the old narrow paths of virtue, to which God in his word has directed us; and if ever we are tempted to hope for the divine mercy, while our works are evil; let us reject the suggestion as the artifice of an enemy, that would cheat us of our salvation. God has declared unto us his whole will; and let us not pretend to be wise above what is written, and to know more than he has revealed. He has assured us, that if we sincerely endeavour to obey and serve him, as he requires, that there is laid up for us a crown of glory. This promise his veracity will infallibly make good; nor can we with any justice hope, he will remit the penalties, if we violate the conditions he has prescribed; and we may be assured, that as our judge is not unrighteous to forget our good works, so neither shall the ungodly and sinner escape the woes he has denounced against them. The one shall certainly receive the joys he has prepared for them who love and obey him; the other be unalterably fixed in that eternal state of torment, which awaits the objects of his displeasure.

DISCOURSE CXXVIII. *Ben. Calamy.*

The certainty of our resurrection proved.

I Cor. 15. 35.

*But some men will say, how are the dead raised up?
and with what body do they come?*

AFTER St. Paul had firmly established the truth and reality of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead; he proceeds to infer from thence the certainty of our own resurrection. If Christ, says he, "be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen." That is, "it can no longer seem impossible or incredible, that God should raise the dead, since you have so plain and certain an example of it, in the person of our Lord, who having been truly dead and buried, is now alive, and hath appeared unto many, with the visible marks of his crucifixion, still remaining on his body: and the same power which raised Jesus from the dead, is able also to quicken our mortal bodies*." When the apostle preached unto the *Athenians*, concerning the resurrection of the dead, the philosophers mocked at him, and entertained his doctrine with contempt. Indeed, it was one of the last things the heathens received into their belief, and is yet the greatest objection against Christianity, "How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come†?" are questions that almost every

* Acts 17. 3.

† I Cor. 15. 35.

every one is ready to make, especially those who love to cavil at religion. I shall therefore, from these words shew, that the resurrection of the dead, even of the very *same* body which died and was buried, contains nothing in it impossible or incredible. And then observe what difference the scripture makes between a glorified body, and this mortal flesh.

The most common received opinion amongst Christians, is, that at the last day, we shall rise again with the flesh in which we died. Most of the ancient fathers did believe and teach, that at the general resurrection, men would be restored to the very same bodies, which were laid in the grave; and that as our Saviour Christ arose with his former flesh, bones, and limbs, so likewise shall we at the resurrection. That the primitive Christians did generally believe and expect, that they should at the resurrection rise again with the very same bodies in which they lived on earth, evidently appears from the heathens malice and envy towards their dead bodies, which they would reduce to ashes, and then scatter and throw them into the air and rivers, thinking thereby to defeat their hopes of a resurrection. Such of the antient Christians as defended or explained this article of the resurrection of the dead, had generally recourse to such principles and arguments, as suppose the very same body, flesh and members, to be raised again, that the soul animated in this life; and in truth, this is the most plain and easy notion of a resurrection. For nothing dies and is corrupted but the body; the soul goes upward and returns to God; and therefore nothing can be properly said to be raised again, but only that very body which died and was corrupted. If at the last day God gives a new body to our souls, that cannot literally be called the resurrection of our bodies; since the most proper and useful signification of the word,

word, is, that the same flesh which was separated from the soul at death, should be again vitally united to it.

The scripture in many places, assures us, that the very same flesh shall be raised again. I will not insist on the words of *Job*, that tho' *worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he should see God* * ; because I cannot think the primary and original meaning of them, doth at all relate to the resurrection, but are a plain prophecy of his own deliverance, and an high expression of his confident hope in God, that he would vindicate his innocence, and bring him out of all his troubles. But there are several other texts in the new testament, more applicable to the present occasion. As when *St. Paul* tells us, "that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality † ;" meaning the body we now live in, which shall one day lie down in the dust. And the scripture describing the places from whence the dead shall rise, plainly intimates, that the same bodies which died, shall revive again. Thus we read, that they "who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting death ‡." The metaphor of *sleeping* and *awaking*, by which our death and resurrection is here expressed, seems to imply, that when we rise again, our bodies will be as much the same with those we lived in, as they are when we now awake from sleep. Again, "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation †. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell," that is, the grave, "delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged every man according

* *Job*. 19. 26, 27 † *1 Cor.* 15. 53. ‖ *Dan.* 12. 2.
 † *John* 5. 28, 29.

ing to their works †." But if the same flesh shall not be raised again, what occasion will there be to ransack the graves at the last day? The sea can give up no other bodies than what it received; nor the grave deliver up any, but those that were laid therein. And was it not necessary, that we should rise with the very same bodies; the graves need not be opened, but we might rest there forever. St. Paul also tells us, that our Saviour shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body §;" which can only be meant, that this our present body of flesh and blood, shall be restored to life again.

If we consider the several instances and examples of those, who either immediately ascended into heaven, or after death were restored again to life, they all seem to confirm this opinion, that we shall rise at the last day, with the very same flesh and blood which we had here. *Enoch* and *Elias* were translated to heaven in their terrestrial bodies. And they whom our Saviour recalled to life, or rose with him at his resurrection, appeared in the very same bodies they had before their dissolution. These being the examples and types of the general resurrection, ours therefore must resemble theirs; and we must also appear at the last day, with the same bodies we lived in here. Even our blessed Saviour, who was the *first-fruits of them that slept*, raised his own body, and appeared to his disciples, with the very prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and with all the other marks of his crucifixion; *behold my hands and my feet*, says he, *that it is I myself; handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have*. From whence it seems to follow, that in our resurrection, we shall be conformable to our Saviour's, and resume the very same bodies, that were laid in the sepulchre.

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† Rev. 20. 13. § Phil. 3. 21.

Lastly, the ancients have urged for a proof of the resurrection of the same body, that the exact justice and righteousness of God requires it. Since God's justice, which consists in the equal dispensation of rewards and punishments, will seem much obscured, at least not so illustriously manifested and displayed to the world, unless the same body of flesh be raised again; that as the body was partner with the soul, in all her actions, whether good or evil, so it should hereafter share with her, in rewards and punishments: It being but just, that the same body which sinned should be punished; and that the very flesh which pleased God, should at the last day, be exalted to glory, and receive a just recompence of reward, for whatever hardships and trouble it underwent here. Having thus evinced the resurrection of the same body, I shall proceed to shew, that there is nothing in this impossible or incredible.

God can distinguish and preserve unmixed from all other bodies, each man's particular body, when dissolved into dust and atoms, however distantly dispersed, and recollect and unite them together; because God is infinite in wisdom, power and knowledge. He can tell the number of the stars and calls them all by their names. He measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, metes out the heavens with a span, and comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure; he numbers the hairs of our heads, and not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge." And is it incredible, that such an infinite understanding should distinctly know the several particles of dust, into which the bodies of men are mouldered; that he should observe the various changes they undergo, and plainly discern to whom they belong? Can it be thought impossible, that he who at first formed us, "in whose book all our members are written; from whom our substance was not hid when we were made in secret, and

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curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth ;" should not again know every atom whereof our bodies are composed. If any curious artist knows every pin and part of a machine that he makes, so as when taken in pieces, he can distinguish one part from another, and readily assign to each its proper place, and exactly dispose them into the same figure and order they were in before ; and can we suppose that the almighty architect of the world, is ignorant of, and unacquainted with the several parts and material, of which this our earthly tabernacle is framed and composed ? At the first creation of the world, all things lay confused, in a vast heap of rude and indigested Chaos, till by the voice of the omnipotent, they were separated and framed into those distinct bodies, whereof the beauty and excellent order of the world doth now consist ; and why may not the same power, at the consummation of all things, out of the ruins and rubbish of the world, collect the several relicks of our corrupted bodies, reduce them to their proper places, restore them to their primitive shapes, and frame them into the same individual bodies, they were parts of before ?

But it may be objected, that it often happens, for the bodies of men to be devoured by beasts, fishes, and other animals, which are afterwards eaten by men, and converted into the substance of their bodies ; and in some places even for men to feed on human flesh ; whereby the substance of one man's body becomes part of another's ; and then how can both rise at the last day with the very same bodies ?

To which I answer, that the body of man does not always continue in the same state, or consist of the same matter ; but is perpetually spending and renewing itself, every day losing and gaining new matter. This is undeniably certain from experience. For so much as our bodies grow, so much new mat-
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ter is added to them, over and besides the repairing of what is continually spent. And after a man comes to his full growth, he usually wastes and carries off, by insensible perspiration every day, in proportion five parts to eight, of what he eats and drinks. So that every man must change his body several times in a year. Indeed, the bones do not change so often as the fluid and fleshy parts of the body; but they also change, because they grow; for whatever grows, is nourished and spends, or otherwise it would not want repair. If the matter of a man's body which he had at any time of his life, be raised, it is as much his own, and the same body, as that which he had at his death, and generally much more perfect. Besides, it is a very small and inconsiderable part of what is eaten and descends into the stomach, that turns into nourishment; the far greater quantity going off by excretions and perspirations. Or if it did not, to what a vast and monstrous bulk should we grow in a few years. So that was the body of a man eaten by cannibals, very little of it would pass into the substance of their bodies. Or, was it more, there cannot be so much as is before gone from the same man's body. If a man lives thirty or forty years, his body hath undergone many new repairs in that time, and yet in the sense of all mankind, it is the same body. Suppose a corpulent man to fall into a gradual consumption, must this man at the resurrection, have no more of his body than he had, when at the hour of his death? Would it not be then the same body, if made up of the parts it had at the beginning of his consumption? If it be, then the same holds as to other times of his life. And consequently this objection of cannibals devouring men, is of no force to destroy the possibility of the resurrection.

Perhaps it may be thought by some, unworthy of God to concern himself about such trifling mat-

ters, or inconsistent with his ease and happiness, to mark and observe all the particles of dust, into which the several bodies of men are dissolved, so as exactly to distinguish and preserve each entire and unmixed, and at last restore them to their old bodies. But it is the greatest excellency and perfection of the divine providence, to extend itself even to the least things, so that nothing is exempted from its care and influence. To imagine the government of the world is a burden to God, is to entertain very mean conceptions of him. Because we are of such weak and frail natures, as that a little business and employment soon tires us, does it therefore follow, that to direct, order and govern the several affairs of this world, must give trouble and interruption to the infinite pleasure and happiness of Almighty God?

Our dust being thus preserved and collected together by God, he can easily remake and rebuild the same bodies which were dissolved. That this is possible must be acknowledged by all who believe the history of the world's creation, as to God's forming the first man *Adam* out of the dust of the ground. For if the body of man turns to dust after death, it becomes what it was originally; and surely the same power that first made it of dust, may as easily remake it, when reduced into dust again. Nor is this more wonderful, than the formation of an human body in the womb; yet of this we have daily experience, tho' as great a miracle, as extraordinary an instance of divine power, as the resurrection of it can possibly be. And was it not so common a thing, it would be thought incredible, that such a beautiful fabric, as is the body of man, consisting of nerves, bones, flesh, veins, blood and other parts, should be produced as we see it is. Why then is it not as easy to believe it shall hereafter be rebuilt, when crumbled into dust? Had we only heard of

read of the curious formation of man, it would have been as natural for us to have asked *how are men made? and with what bodies are they born?* as now to enquire concerning the resurrection, *how are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?*

When God hath raised again the same body, out of the dust wherein it was dissolved, he can enliven and make it the same living man, by uniting to it the same soul and spirit which did formerly inhabit there. That this is possible we have several undoubted examples thereof, in those whom the prophets, our blessed Saviour, and his apostles raised from the dead. Even our Saviour himself, after he was dead and buried, rose again and appeared to his disciples and others, to whom he was known; who had clear evidence and conviction, that he was the same person they had seen expire on the cross. Well therefore might St. Paul say, *why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead**. To raise our bodies from death is not so great an act, as first to create them. If God by the word of his power, could make the heavens and the earth of no pre-existent matter; why should we doubt but that the same God by his mighty power, can also raise to life those, who, tho' dead, do not cease to be. For altho' we cannot answer all the difficulties and objections which the scepticks, wicked and profane, make against this doctrine; nor can exactly discover how our bodies will rise, or the nature of them; yet this ought not to weaken our belief of this most important article of our Christian faith. It is sufficient, that an almighty Being, to whom nothing is impossible, hath solemnly promised to raise our mortal bodies after death to life again. Let such therefore as despise, oppose or object to this doctrine, try their ability on the common appearances of nature; let them rationally explain things that daily happen, before they disbelieve a resurrection, when omnipotency

tency stands engaged to perform it. Do they know how their bodies were framed, fashioned and curiously wrought? Can they give a satisfactory account of this glorious structure their bodies, and the several parts thereof; consisting of members, blood, heart, veins, arteries, and nerves? Or how the body came to be fenced with bones and sinews, skin and flesh? When they can answer these and other difficult questions, concerning the formation of their own body, it will be then time enough to solve all the objections and difficulties about the resurrection of it. But if to do this, they must have recourse to the infinite power and wisdom of the first cause, the sole governor and great sovereign of the world; why should they doubt but that the same power can quicken and enliven that body when rotten and returned to dust, which it first formed? Let us therefore not perplex ourselves, about some difficulties which arise concerning this doctrine of the resurrection; for it is no absurdity to suppose an infinite power can effect such things as seem impossible to our finite beings; but rather let us believe what God hath revealed concerning it. I proceed,

To consider the difference which the scripture makes between a glorified body and this mortal flesh. Our conceptions of a future state, are indeed very dark and imperfect; all we know of it is from the scriptures, which describe it either by representing the several evils and inconveniences we shall be freed from; or by comparing the glory that shall be revealed, with such things as are here most admired and esteemed. Hence it is called an *inheritance*, a *kingdom*, a *throne*, a *crown*, a *sceptre*, a *rich treasure*, a *river of pleasures*, a *splendid robe*, an *exceeding eternal weight of glory*. Not that the happiness of another world consists in outward joys and pleasures; but these things being here most coveted and desired,
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are made use of to represent the transcendent blessedness of a future state, tho' of a different nature, and infinitely surpassing the greatest happiness of this world. They are only little comparisons to help our weak apprehensions; but we shall never know the glories of the next life, till we enjoy them. For tho' from the description the scripture gives us of another world, we may frame a confused idea of it, yet we shall never have a complete notion thereof, till we enter into it. However, enough is revealed concerning our future happiness, to raise our thoughts and affections above the fading beauties and flattering glories of this world; to make us sensible how mean and unsatisfying all human pleasures are, to excite and engage our most earnest endeavours to attain it. For the scriptures inform us, that our bodies, at the resurrection, will be raised "immortal and incorruptible, glorious and spiritual."

At the resurrection, our bodies will be immortal and incorruptible; for "this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality †." Tho' the bodies of the damned will be raised *immortal* and *incorruptible* because intolerable pain and misery will be their portion forever; yet these words do farther signify to the blessed an exemption from all bodily evils, and whatever is penal, afflictive, or uneasy to us. Were we at the general resurrection to receive the same frail bodies again, subject to the miseries we now suffer, no considering person would willingly take it again; he would rather it should rot in the grave, than be bound fast to all eternity to such a cumbersome clod of earth: for such a resurrection is more like a condemnation to death again, than a resurrection to life. The best we can say of this earthly house of clay, the tomb and sepulchre of our souls, is,

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† 1 Cor. 15. 53.

that it is a building which will soon be dissolved and tumble into dust ; that we shall not always be confined to this doleful prison, but in a little time be delivered from this bondage of corruption, be disengaged from this burden of flesh, and admitted *into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* Alas ! what frail, brittle things are these bodies of ours ? how soon are they disordered and discomposed ? to what number of diseases, pains and infirmities are they continually liable ? how doth the least distemper disturb our minds, interrupt our ease and rest, and make life a burden ? If any part of our body suffers pain, what torment and anguish doth it create ? or, when our bodies are well and in health, yet to what labours and perfect drudgery must we submit, to serve their necessities, to provide for their subsistence, and supply their wants ; to repair their decays, to preserve and keep them in health ? How are we forced every night to enter into the confines of death ; if not to cease to be for a time, yet at least to slumber away many hours without any useful and rational thoughts ; and this only to keep in repair those carcasses of clay, and enable them to perform the labours and business of the ensuing day ? In short, so long as these frail, weak and dying bodies, subject to so many evils and inconveniencies, are so closely united to our souls ; we cannot possibly expect much ease, rest or happiness in this life. Our hope and comfort therefore is, that in a little time we shall be delivered from this burden of flesh ; “ when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, nor pain ; when we shall hunger nor thirst no more ; neither see nor feel the light of the sun ; for the Lamb, the Son of God, shall feed us, and lead us into living fountains of water.”

O when shall we arrive to those happy regions, where we shall enjoy constant and uninterrupted
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pleasure both of body and mind, and be never more exposed to any of those evils and inconveniencies, to which we are liable in this state of pilgrimage! where we shall live the life of angels; and be clothed with spiritual glorious bodies; neither subject to those weaknesses and decays, nor want that daily sustenance and continual recruit which our present bodies cannot subsist without. That perfect and compleat happiness which all good men shall enjoy in the other world, consists in having a mind free from all trouble, and a body exempted from all pains and diseases. Thus will our mortal bodies be raised immortal; they will not only by the power of God be always preserved from death, but their nature will be totally changed and altered, so as not to retain the same principles of mortality and corruption; for they cannot, says our Saviour, *die any more*. Our bodies will also be raised in glory. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father*." Our heavenly bodies will be like the glory and splendor of the sun. For Christ "will fashion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body;" the splendor of which we may conceive, by the visions of St. Peter at the transfiguration of our Saviour, whose face "did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as snow." Some imagine, that the excellency of our heavenly bodies will chiefly arise from the happiness of our souls; whose felicity will be and appear in the brightness of our countenance, illustrating them with beauty and splendor.

Lastly, at the resurrection we shall rise with spiritual bodies, but not of a spiritual substance, for that is a contradiction; it being impossible for it to be both a spiritual and bodily substance. Spiritual is here opposed, not to corporeal, but to natural or animal; signifying thereby, the subtilty and

and purity of our heavenly bodies. In this state our spirits are forced to serve and attend on our bodies; but in the other world, our bodies shall wholly serve our spirits, minister to, and depend upon them: a natural body is fitted for this lower, sensible, earthly world; a spiritual body is suited to a spiritual invisible state, to live like saints and angels in heaven. This *flesh* is one of the greatest and most dangerous enemies we have; for it continually tempts and solicits us to evil; it rebels against reason and is ungovernable; “the law in our members wars against the law in our minds, and brings us into captivity to the law of sin;” and when the “spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.” We are now in a state of warfare, and must be always on our guard, continually arming and defending ourselves against the assaults of the flesh, and all its impetuous motions. How doth it hinder us in all our religious duties? how soon are our minds tired, when employed in any divine or spiritual meditations? and how easily diverted from such noble exercises? Well therefore might St. *Paul* so mournfully complain; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death†?* Why! even death will do this; that will give us a full and final deliverance. When once we rise unto life, we shall no more feel those struggles of the spirit with the flesh, which are now so troublesome and uneasy to us. Our flesh will then cease to torment and teaze our souls with evil inclinations, immoderate desires, and unreasonable passions; but being spiritualized, purified, and free from all earthly affections, it will become a fit and proper instrument of the soul in all her divine and heavenly employments; it will not be weary of singing praises unto almighty God to all eternity; it will want no respite or refreshment, meat or drink,

† Rom. 7. 24.

drink, but take an infinite delight in doing the will of God. In these things chiefly consists the difference between this mortal flesh and our bodies at the resurrection. I shall now make a few inferences tending to practice.

And the best way to prepare ourselves for those heavenly spiritual bodies, which shall be bestowed on us at the resurrection, is by continually cleansing and purifying our souls from all fleshly lusts, and by degrees weaning ourselves from all earthly and sensual pleasures and delights. We must refine our affections, raise and exalt them in the contemplation of things above; we must take off our hearts, and leisurely disengage them from what is present and sensible, in order frequently to think of and converse with things spiritual and invisible; that so, soul and body may here in some degree be acquainted with those objects, or spiritual delights and pleasures, which will hereafter be presented to us. A soul wholly immersed in this earthly body is no way qualified for those celestial and glorious mansions which God hath provided for us. An earthly sensual mind is so captivated with bodily pleasures, as to be incapable of relishing or enjoying such as are spiritual, tho' infinitely greater and more to be preferred. But if we subdue and mortify our carnal inclinations, we shall thereby fit and prepare ourselves for another state. When our souls are thus spiritualized, they will soon grow weary of this flesh, and long for their departure; they will be ready and glad to go hence, that they may live and abide in a body suitable to their rational and spiritual appetites.

From hence also, we may give some account of the different degrees of future glory. For tho' all good men shall have glorious bodies, yet they shall not be all equal in glory. They shall all shine as stars, and yet "as one star differs from another in

glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead." Some will have more bright and resplendent bodies than others. Those who have done their Lord eminent and extraordinary service, who have bravely and courageously suffered for his name; or who by the constant exercise of severity and mortification, have arrived to a greater measure of purity and holiness, than others, shall shine as stars of the first magnitudell. The purest and most spiritual bodies will be given to the most heavenly and spiritual souls. And this surely is no small encouragement for us diligently to proceed in the ways of virtue and piety; since the more we wean ourselves from sensible objects and things present, the more glorious and heavenly will our bodies be at the resurrection.

Let these considerations then engage us patiently to bear those afflictions, sicknesses, and bodily pains, with which we are exercised in this life. Let us hold out a little longer, for the *time of our redemption draws near*; when our tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall sigh nor sorrow no more. We are now pilgrims and strangers travelling towards the heavenly *Canaan*, and must therefore expect to struggle with many straits and difficulties; but when we arrive to our journey's end, that will make amends for all. We shall then be in a quiet, safe harbour, out of the reach of those storms and dangers that here surround us; we shall then be at home in our father's house, no more exposed to those inconveniences we now are subject to. And let us not forfeit all this happiness only for want of a little more patience and constancy; but let us hold out to the end, that we may receive an abundant recompence for all the trouble and uneasiness in this our passage, and be enstated in rest and peace, perfect and eternal. Let these

these considerations in particular, arm and fortify us against the fear of death ; for death is now conquered and disarmed, and cannot hurt us. It indeed separates us from the body for a while, but this only in order to our receiving it far more pure and glorious. Let us therefore no longer profess this hope of the resurrection unto life ; or else with more courage expect our own dissolution, and with greater patience bear that of our friends and relations. Let us not fear to go down in the house of rottenness, to lie in the dust, for when God destroys this house of clay, he will raise it again infinitely more splendid and glorious. Let us take care so to live, as that we be “worthy to obtain the other world, and the resurrection from the dead.” Let us in a moral sense, “rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and then the second death will have no power over us.” Since therefore we have this comfortable hope of a glorious resurrection unto life eternal ; let us “purify ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit ;” let us hold fast our profession, and steadfastly adhere to our duty, whatever we suffer here ; knowing we “shall reap if we faint not.” Let us be *steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know, that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.*

DISCOURSE CXXIX. *Ibbot.*

The dissolution of this world by fire.

2 Pet. 3. 11.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness.

THE apostle's design in this chapter, is to establish the truth of that great article of our faith, "the second coming of our Saviour to judge the world," and to answer some objections made against it. He begins by reminding men "of the predictions of the ancient prophets, and of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour, concerning the day of judgment," which many of the disciples imagined was presently to follow the destruction of *Jerusalem*. For this reason, they asked our Saviour these two questions, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? when shall these things be?" That is, the "destruction of the city and temple of *Jerusalem*; and what shall be the sign of thy coming at the end of the world?" With respect to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, our Saviour tells them, verse 34; "that that generation should not pass, till all those things were fulfilled;" and gives them several signs and tokens when it would be. But as to "his coming to judgment at the end of the world;" tho' he often foretold and expressly assured them of it, yet he never determined any fixed

fixed time for it; but on the contrary informed them, that God had reserved it as a secret to himself; “but of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the father†.” However, this opinion was current among the first Christians, and gave occasion to those scoffers the apostle speaks of in this chapter, who derided their hopes and expectations of a judgment to come, since the time they had fixed for it was already past; “where, say they, is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?”

But the apostle shews them, that there had been already such alterations in the world, as were sufficient to justify the belief of those we expect at our Saviour's coming to judge it; and that the delay of a future judgment, is no prejudice to the truth of our Saviour's prediction concerning it, but an argument of God's patience and long-suffering towards sinners, in hopes of their repentance; nor is it the less certain, because the time is not known to us. He then proceeds to confirm their belief of this point, and directs them to make a right use thereof; “but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.” And then concludes with this pious reflection, “seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?” In which words are contained, the conflagration or dissolution of this world by fire; and the influence this consideration ought to have upon us. In order, therefore, to establish the truth of this doctrine, of the dissolution
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† Mat. 24. 36. Mark 13. 32.

of this world by fire, at the last day, *the day of judgment* ; I will first produce the authority of the ancient heathen writers ; and then the express testimony of holy scripture. And afterwards examine what reason has to say, for, or against it.

As to the authority of the heathen writers, this is one of the most ancient traditions, there being no notion, which has more universally prevailed. It is what the old poets sung of, and the ancient philosophers, of different sects and countries, taught in their schools, and the wisest of all nations believed, that fire and water were the two unruly elements, which should destroy the world. And as God once suffered the waters to pass their bounds and overflow the earth ; so the day was coming, when he would give the same permission to fire, to consume and burn up this habitable world. From whence they had this notion is not necessary now to enquire ; but it was the commonly received opinion, and the ancient belief of the world.

And the sacred writings do also afford us many testimonies to the same purpose. The prophet *Moses* thus describes it. “ A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains†.” And the prophet *Isaiah*, “ lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath ; for the heavens shall vanish away like smোক, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein, shall die in like manner||.” “ Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it should leave them neither root nor branch*.” And St. *Paul* assures us, “ that the Lord Jesus shall

† Deut. 32. 22. || *Isaiah* 51. 6. * *Malach.* 4. 1.

shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*." St. Peter also expressly tells us, "that the heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men; and that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up†." Having thus fully proved this point from the holy scriptures, we will now consider what reason has to urge, for or against it.

It must be confessed that unassisted reason could never have discovered this; nor can it be accounted for from natural causes, but must be finally resolved into the will and power of God. And therefore the ancient heathen writers, who deliver this doctrine in such express terms, must have derived their knowledge of it, from those who had some other assistance besides reason, even from the people of God. But as reason has nothing to urge for or against it, so neither is there any thing in the nature of God, or the constitution of things, to make the dissolution of the world by fire an incredible article. The same power that first formed it, can dissolve and destroy it again, when, and as it pleases. The Christian writers believe this truth and rest satisfied with it, upon the infallible testimony of God; but the heathens who entertained this notion, for want of an authority for it, were continually inventing new solutions, being sadly perplexed about it. Indeed, we who enjoy the benefit of a divine revelation, cannot reasonably doubt of this world's dissolution, and an ensuing judgment,

* 2 Thes. 1. 7, 8.

† 2 Pet. 3. 9, 10.

ment, since we are assured that God has done things as great and surprizing as this.

The reason for which the scoffers derided this belief in the first Christians, is weak in itself, and grounded upon a false fact. "Where, say they, is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." That is, excepting that the fathers fell asleep, and gave place to their sons; and that one generation succeeds another; no alteration has happened in the world, to make us think, that there will ever be such an amazing change, as the destruction of this world by fire. But this was false in fact. For when this objection was made, God had wrought several great and surprizing alterations in the world for the punishment of sin. It was not long after God had created this world, and pronounced every thing he had made to be very good, but that he cursed it, because of sin; and from a paradise, a place of blis and happiness, he turned it into this vale of misery and sorrow, this scene of calamities and troubles. After this, because "the wickedness of man was great upon earth, and all flesh had corrupted his way," God brought a flood of waters upon the world, and destroyed every living thing from the face of the earth, both man and beast; *Noah* only and his family excepted, and the creatures which he took with him into the ark, to keep seed alive upon the face of the earth†. For the same reason he spared not the angels, but cast them down to hell, "and delivered them into chains and darkness, to be reserved unto judgment||;" such instances as these, especially that of the deluge, the scoffers were willingly and wilfully ignorant of, because they are so many arguments for a future reckoning; as they are also undeniable proofs of God's hatred of sin, and that he will pu-
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† Gen. 6. 5.

|| 2 Pet. 2. 4. 6.

nish it. From these great and amazing things which God has formerly done, we may conclude, that he can do as great things hereafter. There is no objection to be made against the things we look for hereafter, but what might have been as strongly urged, against those which have already happened. But,

Is the dissolution of this world by fire so strange and wonderful, that we cannot believe it? Why, so did those things appear to be, which have been long before our time. They were esteemed strange, incredible, and even reasoned against as impossible, and endeavoured to be confuted and exploded. Strange it was that God should create such a world as this; for we ourselves are fearfully and wonderfully made. Strange it was to behold that destruction, which God brought upon the earth, not long after he had made it, by a mighty flood of waters, in which every thing perished that had life. It must be confessed, these are very great and astonishing things; such as could not easily have been conceived or believed. Why then should we doubt of the things which are yet to come, only because they are new and unheard of? Strange and surprizing this! For since such great things have already been wrought, the belief of the like great revolutions yet to come, is equally easy and natural. Reason has much to say for it, but nothing against it. For why is it not reasonable to suppose, that God will not be as wonderful in his dealings with the children of men in future ages, as in those already past? And since by the word of God it appears, that the world was formerly destroyed by water; why may not the heavens and the earth which now are, be reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men?

It would be vain to attempt a description of this amazing change and revolution of the world; this
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great and terrible day of the Lord. To represent the general consternation at that time; the horror and confusion which will then seize mankind, especially, the wicked and impenitent. These things far exceed our narrow capacities, and all that we have seen, heard, or can conceive. We have no colours strong and lively enough to draw them in; we have neither words to express, ideas to form, or comparisons to make, whereby to illustrate and properly describe them. Some faint resemblance thereof we may indeed represent to our minds, by the frightful and shocking spectacle of a great city in flames. To see the misery and distraction of the people, every one in utter confusion and despair; how the wisest men are amazed, and the stoutest terrified. Most dismal must it be, to behold the *abomination of desolation raging in the sacred places*. To hear the cries of the people, the roaring and cracking of the fire, the terrible falls of great fabrics and spacious buildings.

But how much more dreadful will that day be, when not only one city, but all the cities of the world, and even the world itself shall be burnt up. "When the heavens themselves shall pass away with a great noise, and the element shall melt with fervent heat; when all faces will be turned into paleness *; when the sun will be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken †." When the whole face of nature shall be changed, and appear in the most mournful dress; every place uttering intolerable pains; the great deep boiling, the mountains smoking, and the whole course of nature dissolving; "great earthquakes in diverse places, fearful sights, and great signs from heaven. Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring

* Jerem. 30. 6.

† Mat. 24. 29.

ing, and men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon earth. And then shall they see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory †."

Thus terrible and astonishing will this be, to all the people of the earth; but much greater terror and confusion will be to the wicked, "who will call in vain to the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them; who will in vain fly into the clefts of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth †." No heart can think of these things, and not be filled with fear and wonder. We may well say with *Balaam*, alas! *who shall live when God does this *?* who shall be able to stand before him, or abide the day of his coming? "But the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished †." And *St. Paul* assures us, that both the righteous which are dead and living, shall be rescued from the common calamity. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord †. This brings me.

To consider the effect and influence, which the thoughts of this dissolution of all things ought to have upon us. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness." If we
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† Luke. 21. 25, &c. † Luke. 23. 30. Isai. 2. 19.

* Numb. 24. 23.

† 2 Pet. 2. 9.

|| 1 Thes. 4. 16. 17.

be fully persuaded of the truth of this great article; if we really believe, “ that the heavens and the earth which are now, and are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men ; ” this is such a weighty and serious concern, that the consideration of it cannot but make some religious impressions on us. Whenever we reflect upon what we read of that *great and terrible day of the Lord*, we cannot but resolve to use our utmost endeavours to be delivered from these flames, and escape the wrath to come. And since this can only be done by leaving and forsaking our sins ; what manner of persons ought we to be ! how exemplary in all holy conversation and godliness ! how fruitful in every good work ! That when our Saviour appears to judge the world, “ we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blemish ¶.” But the consideration of this dissolution should be a most prevailing motive to all holy conversation and godliness ; as it affords us an astonishing instance of the power and majesty of the great God ; also an undeniable proof of the meanness and vanity of all worldly things, and is a sufficient warning for us to provide for another state.

By this instance we may plainly learn, that God wants no instruments to save, or to destroy. As he created all things, so they are all at his command ; and “ he can make the creature his weapon, for the revenge of his enemies *”. If he does but speak the word, the frame of nature, the elements, and the world are at once immediately dissolved. “When he is angry, the earth trembles and quakes, the mountains shake, the springs of water are seen, and the foundations of the round world are discovered at the chiding of the Lord, at the blasting of the breath of his displeasure. There shall go a fire before him, and

¶ 2 Pet. 3. 14.

* Wisd. 5. 17.

and burn up his enemies on every side. His lightnings shall give shine unto the world, and the earth shall be afraid, the hills shall melt like wax, at the presence of God, the Lord of the whole earth ||."

Thus is God terrible in maieſty, mighty in power, and wonderful in his works. And is not this an awakening thought, enough to ſtartle the boldeſt ſinner, and rouſe us all out of our ſpiritual ſlumber and ſecurity? how greatly does it behove us to walk humbly before him, with godly reverence and fear, who is thus highly exalted! and what deſperate madneſs, what brutiſh ſtupidity is it, to affront and provoke him, who can thus deſtroy us with the breath of his mouth, and ſend us down quick into hell? "He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs," when none will be able to eſcape his vengeance, nor that puniſhment which will then purſue the wicked. "O conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you! for our God is a conſuming fire."

As this diſſolution of the world is an undeniable proof of the meanneſs and vanity of the world, it ſhould teach us not to love the world, or the things that are in it, but to wean our affections from them. If we did not ſet our hearts and minds ſo eagerly on theſe things, we ſhould not be ſo immoderate in our deſires and purſuits after them. And the conſideration of the end of the world, ſhould ſurely make us out of conceit with ſuch fading perishing vanities. Indeed, the many accidents and uncertainties to which all things temporal are liable, are ſo many arguments to diſſuade us from placing our happineſs in them. The wiſe man elegantly ſtiles them, *things that are not*; or, which have no certain and permanent being. "Riches make themſelves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven

ven *.” The daily casualties which happen ought to abate our esteem for these transient things, and to render them so much the less valuable. And the world itself which ministers to our pleasures and vices, to our lust, avarice and ambition, is hastening to a dissolution. The time is coming when a period will be put to it; when the earth, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; when the works of nature, art and industry shall be destroyed; when all the pride and pomp of life shall pass away and vanish into smoke; when all disputes and contention, avarice and ambition shall cease, and the objects of these passions be forever removed from our eyes; when all civil marks of difference and distinction shall be done away; when the greatest empires and imperial cities, shall be laid waste and desolate without an inhabitant; when the proudest trophies and monuments of glory shall be crumbled into dust, and be no more remembered.

Since then this is the condition, and will be the fate, of all that is in this world, why should we who are candidates for an heavenly immortality, set our affections on any thing less permanent and durable than ourselves? Since all things here are so very disproportionate to the capacities of our souls, and their eternal duration; why should we set our hearts and minds on the enjoyments of them? And the thoughts of the dissolution of this world, should extinguish all our heats and contests, cure our pride and ambition, abate our love of sensual pleasures, and make us perfectly indifferent as to what happens to us here. Let us “not love the world, nor the things that are in the world; — for the world passeth away, and the lust thereof †.” Let us “use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion thereof passeth away.” And therefore this is a sufficient warning, for us to provide for another world. Not only

* Prov. 23. 5. † 1 John. 2. 15. 1 Cor. 7. 31

only we ourselves are of a short continuance here, but the world itself is transient; so that this short and imperfect state will not admit of any great and lasting designs. Here we are straitened for want of time, and therefore we need not be much concerned about what we do. But the next life is eternal and immutable, is capable of the greatest and noblest designs, such as are worthy of a rational creature, and what deserve our utmost care. For there we may be happy, not a few days or years, but infinitely, and to all eternity. And the only way to secure this happiness, is by a life of piety and virtue; "by all holy conversation and godliness, by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, purifying our nature, and renewing ourselves after the image of God, who created us in righteousness and true holiness." This world is made up of mixt multitudes, and the kingdoms of the earth consist of good and bad; but at the last day, there will be a grand separation made of the righteous from the wicked, and an eternal difference put between them. "Into the kingdom of heaven no unclean thing shall enter, and without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

If therefore we expect to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, we must prepare for it, by cleansing ourselves from all impurities and defilements, and walking as children of the light. And this is the inference the apostle draws: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness." Seeing then the world itself must undergo such a change, be purged and refined by fire, and be made perfectly new, that it may be fit for the glorious kingdom of Christ; how much more necessary is this change and renovation to be made, in those who are to be the subjects of that kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteousness! If this earth must

be purified by fire, and the heavens themselves are not clean in God's sight, how shall man be able to appear before him; "who is filthy and abominable, and drinks iniquity like water*!" Not that this change can be wrought in us, as it will be in the heavens and the earth, by fire, by the fancied flames of purgatory, for which there is no ground, either in scripture or reason; but it must be produced in us by such methods, as both scripture and reason direct us to, and which are proper to influence rational creatures; by such suitable considerations and reflections as has been before suggested; by setting God always before us, and reflecting on his infinite majesty and power; by weaning our affections from this world, and fixing them on heaven; by giving diligent attendance to all the duties of religion, and being constant in the practice of those holy rules which the gospel prescribes; by denying ourselves, and striving to subdue our corruptions, and perfect our virtues; and by praying to God for the assistance of his holy spirit, to enable us to bring our wills to a conformity with his. Thus may we escape the corruption which is in the world thro' lust; or cleanse ourselves from that guilt and pollution, which we have contracted by our conversation with it. Thus will there a new heart, and right spirit be created in us, which will remain when all these things shall be dissolved, and rescue us from the general ruin; and thro' the merits of our Saviour, procure us admittance into heaven, where we shall have a treasure that faileth not, a kingdom which cannot be shaken, a city which hath everlasting foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

* Job 15. 16.

D I S-

DISCOURSE CXXX.

Of the future judgment. Bp. Moor.

Acts 17. 31.

He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness.

N O man travelled so far to preach the gospel, and persuade men to believe and conform to his holy laws, as *St. Paul*. When he was at *Athens*, observing that the *Athenians* inscribed their altars, and directed their devotions to the unknown God *, he thought he should enlighten their understandings and inflame their devotions, by discovering to them the nature of that God, which they so little knew; wherefore he declared that this God made the world and all things therein, and he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is worshipped with mens hands; for he giveth to all life, breath, and all things, being compleatly perfect, and entirely subsisting of himself. The apostle shews the absurdity and unreasonableness of idolatry, to which the pagans were greatly addicted. *For as much then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone graven by art, or mans devices †.* That is, if men are the workmanship or offspring of God, and the images which they worshipped were made by their own hands; then should they tender their devotions to that God, who gave them their beings, and not to the golden,
 Vol. V. P silver,

* *Acts 17. 16.* † *Acts 17. 29.*

silver, or wooden images, which they carved with their own fingers. He being more senseless and stupid, than the stocks and stones, that can believe and adore that for God, which he himself made ; which is to believe, that the image made man, who was its maker.

The apostle having thus proved the existence of one almighty God, maker of heaven and earth, which is the foundation of all religion ; and also exposed the folly, madness, and impiety of worshipping idols ; which is to give the honour, only due to him, unto the meanest of his creatures ; he then proceeds to exhort them to repentance. The doctrine of repentance he enforces from an argument taken from the justice of God, which engaged him to decree a time when he will call men to an account, and pass judgment on their behaviour here ; rewarding all good actions, and punishing the evil, where persevered in without repentance. But when the philosophers heard of the resurrection of the dead, the natural inference from the doctrine of a future judgment, some mocked, others desired to hear more of this matter. It was the *Epicureans* most likely that mocked at a future judgment ; for they whose passions and lusts so far transported them, as to affirm, that God regards not the world, nor observes the lives of men, might well be supposed to deny his judging it hereafter. And probably it was the *Stoicks*, who desired to hear St. *Paul* again, for farther information in the weighty concern of a judgment to come ; no sect of philosophers having so truly stated the measures of good and evil as they have done ; and whose doctrine and rules of life, come the nearest to the Christian institution. And if the *Stoicks*, who were in a manner strangers to all supernatural revelations, could desire instruction about the day of judgment ; surely we Christians, who are baptized into that faith, where it

is a principal article ; and are assisted by divine grace, so to frame our lives as that we may be accepted at the day of judgment, ought rightly to perceive the nature of it, and be so affected therewith, as that we may make it our chief business, to prepare and qualify ourselves for the second-coming of Christ, to be our judge. “ Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead *.”

These words imply the following particulars. The certainty of a future judgment, confirmed to us by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. That Christ is to be our judge. That this judgment will be universal, and include all men, even the whole world. That the time of this judgment is already fixed ; *God having appointed a day.* And that all will be judged by a law, the most just and equal. *For he will judge the world in righteousness.* But before I shew the force of the apostle’s argument, for a day of judgment, taken from the resurrection of Christ ; I shall insist on such arguments to prove it, as may be discovered by natural light.

The certainty then of a future judgment to come, may be evinced from the nature of God, and the state of this world. For if we believe there is a God, we must grant that he is a being of infinite perfections, whereof one is justice ; and that a being infinitely just, will not always suffer injustice to go unpunished. If we also reflect on the condition of things in this life, we shall find many unjust actions to escape punishment, and be attended with success ; from whence we may reasonably conclude, that a time will assuredly come, when God will bring these wicked deeds to judgment ; for the judge of all the earth will do right. As God by creating

the world with such order and beauty, manifested his almighty power and unsearchable wisdom; as *He* by so excellently preserving, and continually providing for the necessities and wants of his numerous creatures, convinces us of his wise providence, perpetual care, and kindness for us; so by examining at the end of the world, all the actions of his rational creatures, in this life, and rewarding or punishing their past behaviour, according to what it has been; *He* will fully evidence and display his exact unerring justice. We now often see notorious wicked men to prosper and flourish; whilst the truly virtuous and humble are abused, oppressed, derided and contemned: as if prosperity was the reward of wickedness, and adversity the natural fruit of virtue. But since it is inconsistent with the divine justice, that piety should always go unrewarded, and sin unpunished, we may therefore conclude, that tho' God for good reasons sometimes forbears sinners, and doth not constantly bestow present rewards on holy, good men, yet he hath assuredly appointed a day, which is drawing on, *when he will judge the whole world in righteousness.* Nor should any wonder, that a Being infinitely just does not always immediately reward virtue and punish sin; since great advantages may accrue to good and bad men, from God's forbearance. For were good and pious actions immediately rewarded, it would make us too much in love with this world; and nothing more powerfully weans our hearts from it, than trouble, losses, and disappointments. When men are afflicted and persecuted, then, if ever, they will confess and beg pardon for their sins, look up to heaven for succour and relief, and place their affections on certain unperishable delights, of which no earthly power can deprive them. So that crosses and sorrows are very proper to disengage us from the pleasures of this life, and to make us earnestly
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desire those of the next. Our blessed Saviour was made perfect by sufferings. Again,

The nature of God's covenant with us, requires, that good men should in this life be exposed to sufferings, as well as receive blessings; this world being a state of trial, as the future will be a state of rewards. But were good mens virtuous deeds immediately recompensed; as then there could be no opportunity afforded to exercise the Christian virtues of meekness, patience, self-denial, and readiness to forgive injuries; so would there be no trial of the sincerity of our love to God, and how much we could contentedly for his sake lose and suffer in his cause. And as to wicked men, they have great reason to be thankful for God's forbearance; who by sparing them when they deserve punishment, it gives them time to repent of their having offended a God full of mercy and compassion, and is a most prevailing argument for them to break off their sins, by a speedy return to their duty. Let none then complain of God's delaying to punish the wicked, for was he not merciful as well as just, no flesh could live and appear before him.

Another argument for a future judgment may be taken from our own nature. God by giving us a power over our actions, hath made us free agents. In the right use of this power consists virtue; in the abuse thereof, vice. So that if we will, we may do good, and avoid evil. Which liberty to do good or evil qualifies us to be governed by laws, and makes us capable of rewards or punishments. But since God does not judge us in this world, for the use of such powers, we must reasonably expect him to do it in the next. God hath also furnished us with understandings to distinguish between good and evil, to know what will please or offend him. Indeed, the eternal unalterable difference between good and evil, may so easily be discovered by natural reason, that

even the most barbarous and illiterate, are not without a sense of the agreeableness and beauty of virtue; the odiousness and deformity of vice. For our natures are so framed, that we cannot do good or evil, but we must approve of the one and condemn the other. A virtuous act affords us satisfaction and delight; an evil one remorse, trouble, and fear.

And this not from the dread of punishment which human laws may inflict, but in cases where they do not reach, and as to facts that cannot be discovered. What sentiments the pagans had of virtue and vice, rewards and punishments, appear from the observation which Barbarians made when they saw the viper fastened on St. *Paul's* hand, who on the occasion, declared it their general opinion, that he was a murderer; and tho' he had escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffered him not to live *. Which shews that even these pagans could distinguish between good and evil; that they thought good actions deserve reward, and evil ones punishments; that however heinous sinners escape the sentence of human laws, yet divine vengeance will still pursue them; and consequently, that there are dreadful punishments, far exceeding those of human laws, from which notorious sinners cannot secure themselves, tho' they fly from the country where their crimes were committed. I might also instance in *Felix*, a man in great authority; whose conscience when awakened by St. *Paul's* excellent discourse, made him so sensible of his vile guilt and great wickedness, that he was seized with a fit of trembling. The character nor quality of his person, as governor of the people, could not hinder him from betraying his fear, and discovering the terrible apprehensions he had of a judgment to come.

The insufficiency of human laws to reward virtue or punish vice, is also another evidence for a future
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* Acts 28. 4.

judgment. Mighty armies and bodies of men will commit rapine and violence, maugre all laws to punish and restrain them. Many sins are so secretly acted, that no law can extend to them; which yet the justice of God will bring to light and judgment. A person may be very wicked, full of treachery, malice, uncleanness, and revenge, without being punished by any human laws; but God strictly requires the right government of our thoughts, and will as certainly punish those that are wilful, as any sins we act in the sight of the world. Nor can civil laws reward all kind of virtue; since there can be as many secret instances of virtue as of vice. Good men do many charitable, generous acts, of which the world knows nothing; and who expect no other reward than the favour of God, and the joy which from thence naturally arises in their minds. And in all ages worthy men have suffered the greatest evils, without hope or prospect of any temporal recompence. *They have been tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection* *. Thus far the necessity of a future judgment appears from natural reason.

The last argument I shall make use of for a judgment to come, is that of St. *Paul*, taken from the resurrection of our blessed Saviour. For *if Christ be risen from the dead*, then is our resurrection possible. He is the head, and we the members of the same body, the church; his resurrection therefore infers the possibility and necessity of ours. For we cannot suppose the head to be revived and raised from the dead, without all other parts of the body; that would be like a master without servants, a king without subjects. If God raised Christ from the dead, that he might judge both quick and dead; it becomes absolutely necessary, that all the dead should be raised, whom he is to judge. In truth, as a

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* Heb. 11. 35.

judgment to come is a fundamental article of our religion, so is it exceedingly agreeable to human reason, as before observed; for if God created us, and that all we enjoy is from him, what is more reasonable than for him to call us to an account, and pass judgment on us, according to the use we have made of what he committed to our trust?

But some will say, that tho' a future state of rewards and punishments, seems very suitable to natural reason, and is a fundamental part of all religion; yet little of these things appear in the law, which God gave to the *Jews* his own people. To this may be answered, that the hopes they had of future rewards, were not grounded on their law, but came to them by a general tradition from the patriarchs and other good men; and which were afterwards more fully explained and confirmed to them by the holy prophets. Indeed, the notions of the next life were never so amply unfolded, and clearly taught the *Jews*, as about the time of the *Babylonian* captivity. When the wall of *Jerusalem* was broken down, the house of God consumed by fire, the vessels of the temple destroyed, the public exercise of religion suppressed, and the people carried captive into a strange land; then, that they might not forget their God, when labouring under such dreadful, sharp, and various calamities: the prophet *Daniel* gave a more distinct account than any before him, of a future judgment, and of recompences laid up for afflicted virtue†. “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame.” About this time, *Isaiah* also prophesied, “thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust†.” Then also *Ezekiel* uttered a prophecy, “that flesh and sinews should come on dry

† Dan. 12. 2.

† Isa. 26. 19.

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dry bones, that skin should cover them, and that the breath of life should enter into them||;” from whence some call him the prophet of the resurrection. After this time, the apprehensions of another world, and the hopes of heavenly rewards for temporal sufferings, daily encreased. And tho’ the Sadduces under all that light were so stupid as to deny the resurrection, angels, and spirits; yet the Jewish nation generally believed a future life. I proceed to shew,

That God hath appointed his son Jesus Christ to be our judge, tho’ God by right of creation is both judge and governor of the world, yet he has translated this right unto his son our blessed redeemer. *The father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the son**. God by this has greatly honoured his son, and also manifested exceeding kindness and good-will to men: great honour to his son, in that, he who was despised by the world, as the son of a carpenter, slandered as a glutton and wine-bibber, traduced and reviled as a wicked impostor, blasphemed as an agent for devils; and at last accused, condemned, and executed as the worst of malefactors; shall return again in great glory, riding on the clouds with ten thousand of his saints and angels, to execute judgment on the same world, that had so maliciously treated him: *and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed, and of their hard speeches which sinners have spoken against him.* And God by giving his son this power, hath also manifested much kindness and good-will to us. For Christ being our judge in his human person, we shall be able to see our judge; but no fleshly eyes can behold the majesty of God, or bear the glories of his presence; whom neither the righteous nor wicked shall ever

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see,

|| Ezek. 37. 6, 7.

* John 5. 22.

see, till these mortal, earthly bodies are changed into immortal and heavenly ones. Then, indeed, it shall be our infinite happiness and reward to see God as he is, and dwell in his presence, to love and worship him a whole eternity. It will also be matter of great comfort, to have Christ our judge, who assumed and was liable to all the infirmities of our nature; who is sensible of the frailties, errors, and manifold temptations, which daily assault us, and will make a merciful, gracious allowance for them; who has felt our weakness and will pity it. On the other hand, nothing will more heighten the terrors of the wicked, than for Christ to judge them, who was their advocate and daily intercessor with God; but they thro' their impenitent hard hearts have defeated and rendered ineffectual his powerful mediations at God's right-hand. He would have persuaded them to chuse everlasting happiness, by the most endearing promises, offering to assist and encourage their weak endeavours, with supernatural helps; but they slighted his invitations, rejected his offers of assistance, continually affronted his mercy, abused his unwearied patience, injured and derided his most tender compassions. Alas! what dreadful fears and apprehensions will these wretched sinners have, when the son of God shall pronounce judgment against them. And,

This judgment shall be universal; for *he will judge the world.* It will include both good and bad. Some shall rise to everlasting life, others to eternal shame. Persons of all ages, times, places, characters, qualities, and conditions, without exemption or excuse, must appear before the seat of this judgment. No gift can bribe this judge, no power resist him, no eloquence importune him to stop or delay his proceedings; but he will immediately, impartially, uncontrollably give an irreversible

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verfible fentence on all flefh, from whom no appeal can lie. As for nations and kingdoms God will judge them only in this life. For focieties can only have a fubfiftance in the prefent world ; therefore as their public management and behaviour have a tendency, either to advance God's glory, or reflect on him difhonour and contempt, fo will he reward or punifh them here ; becaufe bodies politic will not exift in another ftate. Indeed, fingle perfons fhall be punifhed in the next ftate, for what fins they committed as members of the public body ; but then every kingdom will only here have its fhare of the divine favours or judgments, while it continues in a national capacity. A kingdom by wife laws, may protect, prefervé, and promote the public true worfhip of God, and fuppreff atheifm, profanefnefs, irreligion and idolatry ; and by encouraging virtue and punifhing vice, it may countenance the holy and innocent, and be a terror to evil doers. When any nation purfues thefe excellent defigns, God generally makes them victorious over foreign enemies, or bleffes them with peace at home, riches and plenty. But if any people defpife the public fervice of God, or by negligence and indifferency fuffer the purity of divine worfhip, to be depraved and corrupted with the inventions of men ; he then ufually removes from them the light of his gofpel, permits them to grope in darknefs and error, to be deluded with vanity and fuperftition, for not rightly eftimating the bleffings he beftowed.

The time of this judgment is alfo fixed, *God having appointed a day.* But this is kept fecret ; for *of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels in heaven, nor the fon, but the father**. The reafons why God conceals the day of judgment from us, are the fame as his not letting us know the particular

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* Mark 13. 32.

cular time of our death ; namely, that men might not fall under horrors and consternations, at the near approach of that day ; and also that not knowing when it shall come, to make them to be always in due preparation for it. Did we know the precise day of our death, the thoughts thereof would continually rack and perplex our mind. We should have no appetite to study, or business, and all necessary employments for the benefit of ourselves and others in this life would be laid aside. No advantage from the invention or improvement of arts and sciences, or the wise administration of public affairs, could ever have been expected from those who have greatly benefited the world, had they foreseen, that death would have cut them off in the flower of their age. And had the particular time of the last judgment been declared from the beginning, the first ages of mankind would have been but coldly affected with the consideration of it ; the most dreadful dangers, when at a remote distance, making but little impression on the minds of men ; or did we know the certain time, the apprehension of it would fill us with such dread and horror, that we should neglect the enacting good laws for the public use, and neither build, plant, or cultivate the earth, for the benefit of posterity. God therefore in great wisdom hath left the times of death and judgment uncertain to us ; that as we may not cease moderately to study and labour, to procure decent and modest supplies for the necessities and conveniences of ourselves and posterity ; so we should constantly join the service of God with the business of this life, and with resigned minds, wait, and diligently prepare ourselves for the time of our dissolution. O happy shall we be, if we have truly repented, unfeignedly believed the holy gospel, and faithfully performed our duty ; for then we shall be found acceptable to

our gracious God, when he puts an end to our present life, and calls us to an account. Lastly,

All will be judged by a law or rule the most just and equal; for *he will judge the world in righteousness*. The law by which men will be judged, is the will of God, discovered to some by supernatural revelation, to others by the light of nature: and the rule the divine *will* proceeds by, will be most just and equal; 1st, because God will judge men, only for that part of his *will* which they knew, for he will try us by our own conscience, which will either accuse or excuse us; but no man's conscience will accuse him of transgressing laws, whereof he was invincibly ignorant. So that no one will be judged and condemned for want of the light which he never had. 2dly, because it is an easy rule. What God requires of man, is not only possible and practicable, but by the help of his grace, very easy: no man shall be sentenced for what was not in his power, but for acts proceeding from his will, against God's righteous laws. 3dly, Because it is a reasonable rule. God has made nothing our duty but what directly tends to procure and increase our private happiness, to advance and promote the peace and welfare of society; all the evils in the world owing their original to sin. Thus I have proved the certainty of a future judgment, represented who shall be our judge, and on whom judgment shall pass; shewn that there is a day appointed for this great work, and that the whole proceeding shall be according to righteousness. I shall now make a few inferences from this discourse.

† “ And however sinners may live, as if they believed not a judgment to come, yet the greatest of them cannot but sometimes tremble at the apprehensions of it. Men may pretend to outbrave hell and eternity at a distance, laugh at our discourses

† Wake.

courses concerning another world, and think it a piece of wit and gallantry to disbelieve these things; but who dare look damnation in the face, when within prospect of it? There is a time when all men acknowledge the power of religion; and if not to believe, yet to fear a hell. Atheism and prophane-ness may pass current when no danger appears; whilst mens pulses beat strong, their years run briskly on, their condition is easy and prosperous; they go on in their sins without controul, not considering the fatal consequence. But if trouble and adversity happen to them; if their prosperity fails them, and the *iniquity of their ways* begins to *encompass them round about*; if age and infirmities make them to think seriously what they have done, and where they are going; then all their schemes presently vanish, and they awake like men out of a deep sleep, and if not convinced of a judgment to come, yet tremble with horror lest there should be one. — Indeed, where is the soul so well established, so secure of its own sincerity, as to be able to endure the terrors of that day? when even the world itself shall tremble and fall into its ancient chaos; “when the sun, and moon, and stars shall be darkened; the mountains shall quake, and the powers of heaven be shaken; when the earth shall be set on fire, the heavens shall be shrivelled up as a scroll, the elements also shall melt with fervent heat*.” When the “trumpet shall sound, the graves be opened, and the dead arise;” when our consciences shall fly in our faces, and represent to us the sins we have committed, the means and opportunities of repentance which we have neglected, and the everlasting punishment to which we are ready to be condemned.”

“O the terrors of that day! when being distracted with these amazements, we shall in vain
cry

* Joel 2. 10. 2 Pet. 3. 10, 12.

cry out to “the mountains to fall upon us, and to the hills to cover us.” When we shall see no hope or comfort remaining. If we look up to heaven, that place which we now despise, and shall not then be able to approach; there we shall behold our judge surrounded with his holy angels, pronouncing the dreadful sentence of indignation, wrath, and eternal misery against us. If we cast our eyes below, nothing is to be seen but the wretched companions of our misery, *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.* The fire bursting out in which we are to perish, and the devils ready to drag us into that place of torments. How shall we then curse our sins that have brought us into this desperate state of misery? and too late begin to consider the wisdom of those happy men, who in time thought of and provided for eternity. “We fools counted their lives madness, and their latter end to be without honour.” We once laughed at their folly, and at their mortifying themselves in penitential exercises; whilst we freely indulged our ease and debauches. But now they are “numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints†.”

“And when all these and infinitely more terrors than I am able to express, are included in that one thought, of the *judgment to come*; canst thou, O wretched sinner, hear me reasoning of these things and not tremble at the apprehension of them? and if the thoughts of a judgment to come be thus dreadful now, how should we provide against the time, when we must all appear before it? Let this reflection engage us all to examine our past lives, and so to judge ourselves, that we may not be condemned for ever. Let us whilst we have time, “confess our wickedness, and be sorry for our sins. Let us

turn

† Wisd. 5. 4, 5.

turn from our evil ways, that our iniquity may not be our ruin."

Let then the consideration of a judgment day, continually influence our lives. For this will mightily tend to make us sincere Christians, faithful subjects, true friends, good men in every capacity, and to behave honestly in all the stations and stages of life. This will set a watch over our thoughts and lips, because our thoughts and words shall be examined and have sentence pass on them. For how can we cherish malice in our hearts against them who have offended us, if we consider how greatly we shall stand in need of the mercy and favour of God, at his judgment-seat? who will not then forgive us, unless we now forgive them; to them who do judgment without mercy, he will shew no mercy. How can we deliberately cheat, wrong, and defraud our neighbour; when we shall be utterly ruined, if besides doing justice, we do not at the last day find pity and compassion in our judge? why should we be so intent to heap up riches, when we shall be soon taken from them; and so far from their being of use to us at the judgment day, that the more we possess of them, the more difficult will be the passing of our accounts? We have also as little reason to entertain vain and high thoughts of ourselves; since God gives his grace to the humble and meek, but abhors the proud, and at the last day will condemn them: or, that we should defile ourselves with brutish lusts; since our judge is too pure to behold iniquity; and we know that only the pure in heart shall be admitted to see God. Lastly, as the thought of the day of judgment will preserve us from notorious sins; so a view to the infinite rewards good men shall then receive, will support our minds under all afflictions; and endue them with fortitude and constancy to persevere in every righteous honest cause.

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May then a fervent, sincere zeal for God's honour, for the preservation of his pure religion, and for obtaining the salvation of our own souls; prevail with us, by the help of his holy spirit, to forsake all our sins, and entirely conform our minds and practice to the holy will of God; that at Christ's second coming to judge the world, we may be found pure and blameless, and be admitted by him into the mansions of eternal bliss.

DISCOURSE CXXXI. *Abp. Tillotson.*

Of the happiness of heaven.

1 John 3. 2.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

THE circumstances of our future happiness and glory are not perfectly revealed to us, only thus much in general is discovered, that we shall be very happy, because we shall be admitted to the immediate sight and enjoyment of God; and we cannot see and enjoy him, unless we are like him, and then we must be happy. *We know that when he shall appear, or when it shall appear, what our future happiness is, that we shall be like God, for we shall see him as he is.* I shall at this time first represent, as perfectly as I can, the happiness of heaven; I shall then shew, how we may attain this hap-

happiness: and, lastly, I will consider what effect the serious thoughts of this blessed state ought to have on our lives. — And first, as to the happiness of heaven. But what, and how great this is, I am not able to represent. It does not now fully *appear what we shall be*. The scriptures have revealed so much in general concerning the reality and unspeakable felicities of this state, as may satisfy us for the present, and serve to inflame our desires, and excite our endeavours to obtain it. As that it is vastly beyond any happiness of this world; eternal, and far above all we can conceive and imagine.

It is vastly beyond any happiness of this world. It is free from whatever may abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world are mixed, uncertain, and unsatisfying; so far from giving us true satisfaction, that the sweetest of them do but satiate and cloy us. None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixt; there is something of vanity mixed with all our earthly enjoyments, which causeth *vexation of spirit*: There is no sensual pleasure, but is either purchased by pain, and attended with, or ends in it. A great estate cannot be acquired without much care, nor kept without fear, or lost without trouble. Greatness and dignity is troublesome, being uneasy to them who have it, and generally hated and envied by those who have it not. Knowledge, the best and sweetest pleasure of human life, yet if we will believe the experience of one who had more of it than any other man; he assures us, that this “also is vexation of spirit; for in much wisdom there is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow †.” Thus the best things in this world have a mixture of good and evil, joy and sorrow in them; but the happiness of the next life, is free from allays and mixtures. “In the new *Jerusalem*,

† Eccles. 1. 18.

salem, there shall be no more curse, and no night there * ;” nothing to imbitter our blessings, or obscure our glory. Heaven is the proper region of happiness, the only place of pure joys and unmingled felicity. But the enjoyments of this world are uncertain, wavering and inconstant ; when we think ourselves most secure of them, they slip from us we know not how. *Solomon* very elegantly calls them things “ that are not ; why wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ? For riches certainly make to themselves wings, and fly away, like an eagle towards heaven.” Riches are often accessory to our own ruin. The greatness of a man’s estate and nothing else, hath often been the cause of losing both the life and estate of the owner. So that he who enjoys the greatest temporal happiness, still wants one happiness more, namely, to be able to secure to himself for the future, what he possesses for the present. But the happiness of heaven is steady and constant, fixed and unchangeable, as the fountain from whence it springs, “ with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.” And if the enjoyments of this life were certain, yet they are unsatisfying. This is the “ vanity of vanities,” that every thing here can trouble us, but nothing can give us satisfaction. For we are neither pleased with the things of this world, nor yet content without them. If we are hungry it pains us ; if we eat to the full, we are uneasy : if we are poor we think ourselves miserable, and when we come to be rich, we really are so : if in a low condition, we fret and murmur ; and if by chance we are raised to greatness, we are generally farther from contentment than before. So that we pursue the happiness of this world, as little children chase birds ; when we think it near us, and almost in our hands, it flies farther from us, than at the first ;
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may, so far are temporal enjoyments from affording us satisfaction, that the sweetest of them are apt to satiate and cloy us. The pleasures of this world are so contrived, as to yield us very little happiness; if they depart soon, they signify nothing; if they stay long we are sick of them. After a full swing of sensual pleasures we loath it, and after the enjoyment, hate it as much as we courted and longed for it in expectation. But the delights of another world will give full satisfaction, without making us weary of them. Every repetition will be accompanied with new pleasure and contentment. In the felicities of heaven two things will be reconciled, which never was in any sensual delight, namely, long and full enjoyment, and yet a fresh and perpetual pleasure. As in God's "presence there is fulness of joy, so at his right hand are pleasures forever more."

The happiness of the other world is also very great in itself. The scripture describes the happiness of heaven, by such pleasures as are manly and excellent, chaste and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refined than those of sense. And when it makes use of the metaphors of feast, banquet, and marriage, it is by way of accommodation to our weakness, and in condescension to our capacities. But this happiness, so far as the scripture hath revealed it, consists in the perfection of our knowledge, the height of our love, the perpetual society and friendship of the blessed inhabitants of those glorious mansions, and the joyful concurrence of all these in chearful expressions of gratitude, in incessant praises and admiration of the fountain and author thereof. And what can be more delightful than to have our understandings entertained with a sight of the best and most perfect being, with the knowledge of all his works, and the wise design of his providence? than to live in the reviving presence
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of God, to be continually attending on him whose favour is life, and whose glory as much exceeds the greatest princes of this world, as they do the poorest worm. Not that I imagine the happiness of heaven to consist in a perpetual gazing on God, in an idle contemplation on that glorious place. For as we shall be infinitely transported with that blessed sight, so likewise shall we be transformed into the image of the divine perfections; *we shall see God, and be like him.* And what greater happiness can there be, than to be like the happiest and most perfect being? who we need not doubt will find out such employments and delights in the other world, as shall be proper and suitable to that state.

But then besides the improvement of our knowledge, there will be the most delightful exercise of love. In heaven we shall associate with the blessed angels, and the *spirits of just men made perfect*, who are free from those passions and infirmities, which here attend the very best of men. We shall there meet with all those excellent persons, those brave, virtuous and charitable souls, whom we have seen, heard, and read of in this world. There we shall meet with many of our dear relations and intimate friends; perhaps also with many of our enemies, to whom we shall then be perfectly reconciled, notwithstanding our warm and peevish disputes here, even about religion. For heaven is a state of perfect love and friendship, of mutual kindness and good-nature. A place where we may converse freely, without folly or disguise, jealousy or design. There will be no covetousness and ambition, envy and hatred, wrath or peevishness, which here so much disturb and interrupt the peace and quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, schisms and divisions will there cease; not composed by force and compulsion, but by that love and *charity which never fails.* And all religious controversies, which

which are here so warmly debated, will then finally be determined ; not as is now done, by canons and decrees, but by perfect knowledge and convincing light. And when this blessed society is thus met, united in love, they will all join in gratitude to their great patron and benefactor, “ to him that sits on the throne, and to the lamb that was slain, to God even our father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” And they shall sing eternal songs of praise to God for all his works of wonder, for the effects of that stupendous goodness, infinite wisdom and almighty power, so evident and conspicuous in the creation and government of the world ; in particular for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, the comfort of their lives, and all his merciful providences towards them ; but above all for the redemption of their souls, by the death of his Son, for the free forgiveness of their sins, the gracious assistance of his Holy Spirit, and for conducting them safely thro’ all the snares, dangers, troubles, and temptations of this world, to the secure possession of that glory and happiness they are to partake of, and for which they will praise God to all eternity. This will be the employment of the blessed above, this their chief happiness, according to the scriptures. And were there no other, as perhaps there may be ten thousand more, yet generous and virtuous minds will find pleasure enough in improving their knowledge, in exercising their love, in gratefully and perpetually acknowledging the greatest benefits that creatures can possibly receive. And

This happiness shall be eternal. Tho’ this is but a circumstance, and not the nature of our happiness, yet without it, all the felicities of heaven would be imperfect. It would strangely damp and allay our joys, were we certain they should some time have an end. And the more perfect our happiness was,
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the more trouble it would afford us to consider it must have a period. Indeed, was the happiness of heaven like the pleasures of this world, which after a little enjoyment cloy and satiate us, it would be an advantage to have them short; but being so excellent, the happiness would be very imperfect, unless they were eternal. It would vastly diminish the pleasures of heaven, great as they are, to see an end of them, tho' never so distant; to consider that they will one day be exhausted and have an end. God hath so appointed, that the vain and empty delights of this world should be temporary and transient, but that the great and substantial pleasures of the next, shall be lasting as they are excellent. For heaven is an *exceeding, eternal weight of glory*; and to be secured in the eternal possession of our happiness, is an unspeakable addition to it. O vast eternity! how dost thou swallow our thoughts, and entertain us at once, with delight and amazement? This is the summit of our happiness, on which we may stand secure to view all things here below; and how inconsiderable will they then appear to us, in comparison of the vast and endless enjoyments of our future state? Vain and foolish men then that we are! to be so little concerned for eternity, as that for the trifles of time, and the "pleasures of sin which are but for a moment," to forfeit an everlasting inheritance. Who fondly chuse to gratify our lusts rather than save our souls; and madly prefer the temporary enjoyments of sin, before a blessed immortality.

Lastly, this happiness far exceeds any thing we can conceive or imagine. We cannot from the experience of any earthly pleasures and delights, frame an equal idea and conception of it; the felicities and glories of heaven transcending all the same we ever heard of in this world. For who can say how great a good God is? and how happy he can make those

those who love him, and whom he loves? In this imperfect state we are not capable of a full representation of those glories. *Now we cannot see God, and live.* A full description of the pleasures and joys of heaven is too great for our narrow capacities, too strong for weak mortality to bear. “We are now but children and know but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect shall be done away. Now we see thro’ a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face, and shall know even as we are known †.” I proceed,

To shew how, and by what means we may attain this happiness. And that in short is, by the constant and sincere endeavours of a holy life, in and thro’ the mercies of God by our Lord Jesus. Christ indeed is the author of our salvation, but obedience is the condition thereof. It is the *grace of God in the gospel which brings or offers this salvation to us**, but then it is by “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, by living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, that we are to wait for the blessed hope ‡. The pure in heart shall be blessed, for they shall see God;” but “without holiness no man shall see the Lord ||.” To see God is to be happy, but we cannot see him, unless we are like him. The sight and presence of God, would be no happiness to him who is not like God in the temper and disposition of his mind; and “every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself as God is pure.” So that if we live wickedly, and allow ourselves in any known sin, we interrupt our hopes of heaven, and render ourselves unfit for eternal life. We thereby defeat all the designs of God’s grace and mercy, and salvation itself cannot save us, if we neglect that happiness which God offers. Before we can enjoy the promised inheritance, we must

† 1 Cor. 13. 9, 10, 12.

‡ Tit. 2. 11, 12.

* Heb. 5. 9.

|| Heb. 12. 14.

must be prepared for, and “made meet to be partakers of it.” And this life is the time of our preparation for a future state. Our souls will continue forever, what we make them in this world. Such a temper and disposition of mind as a man carries with him out of this world, he shall retain in the next. Heaven indeed perfects those holy and virtuous dispositions that are begun here; but the other world alters no man’s main state, “he that is filthy will be filthy still, and he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous still.” If we do not mortify our lusts and passions here, death will not kill them for us, but we shall carry them into the next world. And was God to admit us into heaven so qualified, yet our sins would hinder us from being happy. Our sensual inclinations and desires would meet with nothing there suitable to them, and the appetites we brought with us, will perpetually torment us, for want of something to gratify them. For “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The happiness of heaven consists in such things as a wicked man cannot relish: and was a covetous, ambitious, or voluptuous man in heaven, he would be like the rich man in hell, tormented with the flames of his own ardent desires, and not able to find in that place of plentiful treasures, one suitable pleasure and delight to allay his heat, or gratify his inclinations. The same also, as to our fierce and unruly passions; were we to carry them there with us, how inconsistent would they be with happiness? not only making ourselves miserable, but be very troublesome to those we should converse with; for was a man of an envious, malicious, and passionate temper admitted into those blissful mansions, he would not only be unhappy himself, but disturb the quiet of others, and raise storms in those calm regions. Vain man! to dream of being happy,

without any disposition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we desire; to live with whom we love. But heaven is directly contrary to the desires and appetites of a wicked man. The joys and delights of that place are purely spiritual, not to be relished by the carnal and sensual. So that the pleasures of heaven would signify nothing to him who is not disposed to take pleasure in them. Heaven is too pure for corrupt souls, a place both unsuitable and unacceptable to a vicious, wicked person. We see then how necessary it is, that we should prepare ourselves for this blessed state, by a constant, sincere endeavour to lead a holy life, and by mortifying every lust and inordinate passion: for till then, we are not meet to be partakers of the felicities in heaven. I shall now consider what effect the serious thoughts of this blessed state ought to have on our lives. And,

It should tend to convince us of the vanity of this life. God hath on purpose made this world troublesome and uneasy to us, that there might be no sufficient temptation to reasonable and considerate men, to become careless of their future happiness; that God and heaven might have no rival here, to divert our affection from everlasting life and glory. When death approaches, and eternity presents itself to our serious thoughts, the things we now so much esteem, will then appear to be of no value; and what we have neglected, to be of infinite concern, worthy the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we duly consider these things in time, we might be convinced of the vanity of this world, before we despaired of the happiness of the other.

It should also make us active and industrious to be good, and to do all possible good in this life, that we may be qualified and disposed for the happiness of the next. Men are generally very industrious

to be rich and great in this world ; but did we value heaven as it deserves, we should take infinitely more pains for that than the other. If we consider the glories above, how must it condemn our folly, that we are less concerned for our souls, and an eternal inheritance, than for our bodies, and things corruptible ? Let us remember how short our time is here, and that when we die, eternal happiness is what we then hope for ; a reward enough to excite our endeavours after it. Would we often represent to our minds the glories of heaven, what fervors should we feel in our hearts ? with what alacrity should we obey God's will ? almost with the same readiness and delight as do the angels, *who continually behold the face of their father which is in heaven.* The consideration and firm persuasion of our future happiness, should actuate and invigorate all the powers of our souls, in the ways of holiness and virtue. It should strengthen our resolutions, and confirm our purposes of obedience, to consider, that if we have our *fruit unto holiness*, our *end will be everlasting life.* It ought to mitigate and alleviate the evils and afflictions of this life. If the way is rough, yet it leads to happiness. And the scripture assures us, that the " suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us †." Temporal evils afflict us more or less, according as the soul is fortified with proper considerations to support us under them. If we consider that we are here as on a journey, travelling to our heavenly country, where we shall meet with inconceivable delights and pleasures ; it should not trouble us much, tho' our way thither be full of rubs and difficulties, this being the common fate of travellers. And when we are safely landed in our own country, with what pleasure shall we reflect on the difficulties and dan-

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† Rom. 8. 18.

gers we have encountered and escaped? the more troubles we have met with, the kinder usage we shall find at our father's house. When we come to heaven our happiness shall be far greater and more lasting than all our miseries here on earth. So the apostle assures us, "that our light afflictions which is but for a moment, shall work for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And what signifies it, tho' we suffer in this world, provided we escape endless torments; tho' we have not our good things here, so as infinitely greater is reserved for us hereafter. Was it not for this hope, the evils and calamities of this life would indeed be insufferable; and Christians would of all men, and *of all creatures, be the most miserable.* But our religion abundantly assures us to the contrary: And this was what made the primitive Christians to embrace sufferings with much chearfulness, to "glory in tribulation, to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven, they had a better and more enduring substance." Lastly,

The consideration of a future state of happiness, should arm us against the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the fearful apprehensions of what may follow, infinitely encreases its terrors. But the comfortable hopes of a blessed immortality, strangely relieves the fainting spirits of dying men, reconciles us to death, and abates our fears. The thoughts of death are dismal even to good men, who stand in need of comfort and encouragement, when conflicting with this last enemy; and to a dying man no consideration is so comfortable as the hopes of eternal happiness. He who considers death as a passage to glory, should welcome its messengers, as bringing the best and most joyful news; and leave this world with greater pleasure, than to remain in it. Thus it evidently appears that the future happiness of good men is incomparably beyond any hap-

happinefs of this world ; great in itſelf, eternal in its duration, and far exceeding any thing we can now conceive or imagine. And yet I am very ſenſible that what has been ſaid, falls vaſtly ſhort of the greatneſs and dignity of the thing. A ſubject, on which we ſhould be continually meditating. For unworthy ſhall we be of heaven, and unfit to partake of ſo great glory, if we take not pleaſure in the contemplation of thoſe things now, the poſſeſſion whereof will be our happineſs forever.

With what joy then ſhould we think of thoſe “great and glorious things which God hath prepared for them that love him, of that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which faſteth not away, reſerved for us in the heavens ?” How ſhould we welcome that happy hour when we ſhall eſcape from theſe priſons, and paſs out of this *howling wilderneſs into the promiſed land* ; when we ſhall be removed from the troubles and temptations of a wicked ill-natured world ; when we ſhall be ſecure from all ſtorms and tempeſts, and ſafely landed in the regions of bliſs and immortality ? O bleſſed time ! “when all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, and death and ſorrow ſhall be no more ;” when mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up of life, and we ſhall enter on the poſſeſſion of all that happineſs and glory which God hath promiſed, which our faith hath believed, and our hopes have given us expectation of. When we ſhall be eaſed of all our pains, reſolved in all our doubts, cleaned from all our ſins, freed from all our fears, happy beyond our hopes, and that happineſs ſecured to us, to all eternity. When we ſhall know God without ſtudy, love him and one another without meaſure, ſerve and praiſe him without wearineſs, and obey his will without reluctance. When we ſhall daily be more and more delighted, in knowing, loving, praiſing and obeying God to all eternity.

How should these thoughts affect our hearts, and influence our lives? The great disadvantage of arguments taken from the considerations of another world, is the vast distance of those things, and their not being sensible to us; and therefore they are not apt so strongly and powerfully to affect and work upon us. But to make amends for this disadvantage, we should often revive and inculcate on our minds, the reality and certainty, the infinite weight and importance of them. We should reason thus with ourselves; if good men shall be so unspeakably happy, and wicked men so extremely miserable in another world; if these things will one day be found true, why should not we act as if they were already present? Why should not we now, as much fear to commit any sin, as if hell was naked before us, and we beheld the astonishing miseries of the damned? And why should we not be as careful to serve God, and keep his commandments, as if heaven was open to our views, and we saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, with crowns of glory in his hand, ready to be placed on the heads of all those who continue faithful to him? The apprehensions of the certainty and nearness of death and eternity, are apt to make our thoughts more quick and piercing, and according as we think ourselves prepared for our future state, to transport us with joy, or amaze us with horror. The soul that is fully satisfied of his future bliss, has begun to take possession of glory, and may say with old *Simon*, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" But the thoughts of death must needs be terrible to him who is doubtful or despairing of his future condition. It would daunt the stoutest heart, to look on death, when beyond it, nothing appears but hell. When the apparition told *Saul*, *to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me*, these words so

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affected him, that *he fell down to the ground, and there was no more strength left in him.* It is as certain that we shall die, as if an express messenger from the other world appeared to every one of us; to tell us so. Why then should we not always live as those that must die, and hope to be happy after death? Let us then “have our conversation in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself. For we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

DISCOURSE CXXXII. *Dorrington.*

The misery and eternity of future punishments.

Mat. 25. 46.

These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

IT has pleased the great governor of the world, to require our homage and obedience, as the just and reasonable condition of enjoying his present and future favour. In order to enforce our obedience, and that we may be entitled to such inestimable blessings, God has represented to us the ter-

rors of his anger, and declared how severely he will punish obstinate and impenitent sinners. Our Saviour, after giving a particular description of the great and universal day of judgment, and of the issue and result thereof, says; that the wicked shall *go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* These two different fates will be the event of the last judgment, and include all mankind. To one of these states all our actions tend. I shall only at present consider the final sad portion of wicked men, as to their future punishment; and the duration thereof. This I shall endeavour to represent as the same appears from scripture, without any regard to uncertain conjectures, which have no real foundation. And this being a subject the most important, we ought to be very serious and attentive to what is said; since we are presuming to enquire what will be the certain end and consequence of a wicked life; and to what a dismal state innumerable persons will bring themselves, by carelessly or obstinately living in a course of known, wilful and presumptuous sin. If we by faith look into the eternal prisons of the damned, we may by this view be deterred from the ways of sin; for by seeing the miserable end of other mens folly, we may learn wisdom, and their misery may occasion our happiness. The nature and condition of this place of punishment, we are allowed to represent so far as the scripture informs us.

And first, it is a place of horrid darkness. Our Saviour speaking of the final punishment which the hardened unbelieving Jews, and other wicked men would bring on themselves, expressed it by their being cast into *outer darkness* †. St. Jude also tells us, that the *blackness of darkness forever is reserved* ‖, as a punishment for the apostate angels. To understand these places literally, is but reasonable, because they

† Mat. 8. 12. ‖ Jude 6. 13.

they represent the places suitable to the design of it. Darkness well agrees with a place of punishment and misery. Light is a chearful pleasant thing, but darkness is sad and melancholy. As light and glory will no doubt adorn the happy mansions of heaven, so we may reasonably suppose, that a dismal darkness will fully the deep caves of hell. It is also said to be filled with fire. Our Saviour, who will at the last judgment be our judge, intimates, that the punishment of sinners will be *everlasting fire* †. And St. Jude says, of some notorious sinners, that they were suffering *the vengeance of eternal fire* *. Indeed, the nature of this fire we cannot presume to describe ; but as it is a fire prepared for the devil and his angels, who are spirits, we may suppose it such, as is able to afflict a spirit with a great sense of torment and pain. And it must also be such as to affect and punish the separate souls of men, while their bodies remain dissolved into dust. It is a peculiar terrible fire, or something which divine wrath has made to be his instrument to punish his wicked and rebellious creatures. The scripture describes this fire, by a *lake of fire and brimstone*, by a *furnace of fire* ‡. So that this must be a dreadful place of punishment, which is prepared for sinners. O how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God ! who of us can dwell with devouring fire ! who can endure everlasting burnings !

But if any are so obstinate, as that they will not understand these expressions literally, yet thus much they cannot deny ; that as the holy scriptures represent the joys and felicities of heaven, by things the most pleasant and delightful here, which yet fall vastly short of the happiness of heaven ; so it represents future punishments by things the most sad and terrible in this world ; and we may then reasonably

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suppose

† Mat. 18. 8.

* Jude 7.

‡ Mat. 13. 42.

pose that these punishments will be much more dreadful, than what is made use of to describe them. From the darkness and fire which are said to be in hell, we may safely conclude, that it is a place sad, melancholy, and full of horror; destitute of all joy and comfort; and where the condemned wretches shall enjoy nothing pleasant or delightful; but be severely punished and afflicted both in body and soul. This will be the miserable end of guilty mirth and pleasures, the final reward of that wickedness which is here thought to be so pleasing and delightful. Thus should we believe as to a place of future punishments, that the nature and condition of it is such, as to render it most dreadful and horrible. And this will more clearly appear, by considering, the company and society of them who dwell there, which extremely adds to the misery and punishment of hell. The holy scripture informs us, that wicked men shall be condemned and cast into that place of punishment which is prepared for the devil and his angels. So that the society of hell is a company of wicked men and devils. All the angels that first rebelled against their maker; all obstinate and impenitent sinners, that in all ages of the world did ever die such, will be confined in hell, to live there together. What woeful, miserable company must these be, since no comfort, delight, or pleasure can be derived from them, but they will rather greatly encrease the unhappiness of each other? this we must conclude from their being all extremely wicked, malicious, and utterly miserable.

The company in hell are desperately wicked and malicious, hating each other. They are all in a state of war, and enemies to one another. Peace, love, order, and government are things too good and happy for that place; but eternal discords and furious contentions, continually prevail and reign there.

there. The exquisite pain and torment which all endure, will excite their rage and cruelty one against another. Perhaps the devils insult over the damned, by telling them what hopes of happiness they are fallen from, what offers of favour and mercy, even of heaven itself, they have refused; how they have trifled away that time on earth, in which they might have gained an everlasting happiness, and lost their immortal souls, thro' an excessive, vain care for their bodies. And we may likewise suppose that the damned will curse those apostate spirits, for their false suggestions, importunate temptations, and for being greatly accessory to their ruin and damnation, by bringing on them the wrath and vengeance of God. Those companions in wickedness who here delighted in each other, will be there the most hateful and uneasy company. This seems to be suggested by our Saviour's parable of the rich man, who was greatly concerned lest his brethren should come into that place of torment*.

Those who tempted and encouraged one another to sin, who hardened each other to contemn and reject all good instruction and wholesome reproof, will, when they come to the end of their misery, hate one another for these things, which before they despised. He, who by fair pretences, covered a false, hypocritical heart, and passed here for a saint, will be sadly ashamed when those who knew him, shall at last find him in hell. Emperors and kings, generals and commanders, the rich, noble and mighty, who have lived wickedly here, will there be huddled, mixed, and confounded among the most vulgar mortals; these will be levelled with their vassals, with those they have commanded or disdained, and be subject to their contemptful reproaches. No order, no respect of persons, no love, pity and compassion is to be found in hell; no

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* Luke 16,

kindness and good-nature appear there; nothing but misery and mutual hatred. These things are the natural products and effects of extreme wickedness; and from hence the company in hell must certainly be very wretched and miserable. What a torment must it be, for implacable, furious enemies, for those who are full of envy, malice, and rage, to be confined together in one close prison? This society must also be very uneasy to one another, because they are thus perfectly miserable, and can associate with none but what are so. How dreadful must it be, to live forever with those who are in continual torment! how dismal, to be eternally confined in this dark and gloomy house of mourning, amidst the howlings and woeful complaints of tortured, despairing creatures? how shocking to our ears, to hear their doleful groans and endless cries! how terrifying and frightful a spectacle, to behold each other surrounded with fire, and burning in flames unquenchable! To see the distorted agonizing looks which such torments produce in every face? But the miserable unhappy state of the damned will be yet more apparent, if we consider,

Those internal miseries which arise from the temper and disposition of their minds. These as they are more near and intimate, so we may justly believe them to be more sensible and tormenting, than any yet mentioned. The hardened sinner being here abandoned to his vices, lusts and passions, and dying possessed of them, must therefore expect to remain subject to them for ever. Wicked lusts and passions are the distempers of the soul, which discompose its pleasing harmony, disturb its peace, filling it with discord and confusion. In their nature they deprive a man of all tranquility and peace, make him such a torment to himself, that he has no enjoyment. A violent, unsatiable desire, is what

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constantly attends every lust and passion? And what greater torment can there be, than violent eager desire? But to desire a multitude of things, and yet to be disappointed therein, is what the damned are sentenced to endure forever. The sinner may even in hell desire and wish for his sensual delights, which being deprived of, he may feel a torment like hunger never satisfied, or thirst unquenchable. He may remember his guilty frolics with remorse, and the causes of his present misery, which perhaps will make him wish they had endured for ever! He may remember with regret how soon they were gone, and mourn that such transient, short and fading delights, were all that he, an immortal being, shall ever enjoy. Our Saviour assures us, that there is *weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell*. This is the deplorable case of sinners. They live in doleful anguish of mind, can perceive nor think of nothing but what gives them grief and sorrow. They mourn when they consider what they were and might have been; what they did enjoy, and must now forever endure. It is very probable, that sinners in hell are transported with vain rage against almighty God, for dealing so severely with them; since we may observe, how such here, when they meet with any considerable affliction, or disappointment, will bid defiance to heaven. Thus a passionate, vicious mind, may be a severe torment to the sinner in hell; as he will continually desire what he shall never obtain, and wish to avoid what he is eternally confined to.

Another torment of mind, which the sinner must endure in a future state of punishment, is bitter despair. His own thoughts tell him he must suffer forever, and he has in continual remembrance the eternity of his misery. His own mind assures him that all his beloved pleasures and joys are gone forever, and he finds himself condemned to a dismal place

place, to a most miserable society of wicked spirits. As his condition is truly desperate, so despair takes possession of his soul, to afflict and torment it. He cannot obtain so much allay and ease, as even to be deceived with a false hope. For he will know that the torments he endures shall last forever. He will always remember the terrible sentence of the judge, which has doomed him to everlasting misery. As hope can alleviate the heaviest griefs, and give some ease under the acutest pains; so despair will render every light evil intolerable. And this must greatly aggravate the severe torments of hell. Lastly, the self-condemnation and rebukes of the sinners own conscience, is what will vastly add to their misery. This is what the scripture means by the *worm that never dies*. Tho' the condemned sinner is angry with God, for dealing as he thinks unjustly, or too severely with him; yet he also highly blames himself, for provoking and drawing on him the terrible wrath of God. As God never destines any man to misery, nor passes an irreverfible decree of punishment on sinners, till they die impenitent; so the thought that they ruined and destroyed themselves, is what will greatly enhance the torments of the damned. They will sadly lament their past folly, for having lost their souls for meer trifles. The condemned sinner will when too late perceive, how vain and worthless all those pleasures, profits, and honours were, for which he incurred eternal damnation. He will then think himself a wretched fool, for enjoying a few momentary, transient pleasures, at the expence of losing his soul to all eternity. Thus a sinner's own mind will lash and torment him. And his case must be very deplorable, who has a terrible God for his enemy, and is, besides, confined amongst devils and wicked men, and is also an enemy to himself. Thus I have briefly represented the future punishment of sinners,

sinners, and if they should not be so terrible as I have described ; yet, it is better for us to fear the worst that can be said, than feel the least that may be true.

I now proceed to consider the duration of future punishments, which will very much add to the terror of it. The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment. The future miseries of sinners will have no intermission ; but as they are to be everlasting, so they will be continual. The condemned wretches will have no respite from torment, no moments of ease or repose ; nothing but a sad long night without rest or sleep. The fire, or worm of conscience will continually torment and gnaw them ; they will constantly despair, and be miserably uneasy to one another. Their ears will never be free from the loud sounds of doleful complaints, nor their eyes cease to be afflicted with horrid spectacles. In this life, those who are most unhappy, have yet some intervals of good to allay the evils they meet with ; but in hell there is nothing but pure, unmixed, continual misery. This the scripture assures us, the wicked *shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone* ||. *And they shall have no rest day nor night.* That is, their torment shall be incessant. The same is also intimated by our Saviour's parable of the rich man who was cast into hell ; whose torment was greatly aggravated, in not being able to obtain so small a refreshment, as a little water to cool his tongue for a moment. The almighty can never be weary of punishing ; his wrath towards condemned wretches, will not abate or diminish ; nor yet the sinners sense of their miseries, grow less by their duration. Those who are in hell, have not the virtue of patience to fortify and compose their minds under affliction ; nor the least glimpse of hope to allay their sorrows. The weary traveller indeed,

Indeed, tho' tired in his journey, is yet comforted when near arrived to his home; but the damned are, not so, they having no prospect of any end to their miseries. How dreadful and terrible is this? O let us then often and deliberately consider, an affair of such weight and importance; that it may have a suitable impression on us! what will never end, and yet may suddenly begin, unless prevented by repentance, deserves the most serious consideration. Let us then fix our thoughts a while on this important concern; that of a vast and endless duration; an unmeasurable and amazing eternity. O eternity! a thing not to be fathomed by our thoughts, or expressed by our words. No space of time that can be imagined is able to measure this duration. Were every grain of sand in all the oceans of the world to be computed, it could not make up the number of years which eternity comprehends. All this would bear no proportion to it. When the sinner has lain thus long in misery, he must still remain there for a perpetual duration. Eternity, will not waste and decay as time does. And sinners have always an eternity of torments to expect and endure. O how terrible and dreadful then must hell be! how ought it now to amaze and affect us! But tho' future punishments are most evidently and expressly revealed in holy scripture, yet men are very unwilling to believe it, and strive all they can, to cavil at and oppose what really is most clear and certain. There are some who conjecture that sinners will be consumed in hell-fire, or turned into nothing. But this is a vain imagination; it being evident, that mankind are endued with immortal souls, and designed to endure forever. This is the excellency and dignity of our nature. And the scriptures also assure us, that there will be a resurrection both of the just and unjust. The bodies of wicked men will be raised
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and reunited to their immortal souls; and at the resurrection, what before was corruptible will then become incorruptible and immortal. But this need not be, were they not to endure forever. For can we suppose that the bodies of wicked men should be raised immortal, only to appear before God's tribunal, and immediately after judgment, to be consumed in hell fire? Besides, the scripture assures us, that the punishment of sinners is everlasting; but this is only possible on beings that exist to all eternity: For what does not exist, cannot be said to suffer punishment. The apostle declares, that sinners *shall be punished with everlasting destruction* *; which would be a very improper expression, if they were only to be everlastingly destroyed. Others object and say, that it is unsuitable to the exact justice of God, to punish the short and transient sins of men in this life, with endless torment in the next. To this I answer, that no government in the world, ever thought it a rule to be observed in punishing, according to equity and justice, that the pain and penalty inflicted, should last no longer than the time which any sin took in committing. And therefore some have been punished with death, others banished and imprisoned, for crimes which were committed in a short space of time. Would men seriously consider, the vile and heinous nature of sin; the excellency of the person against whom it is committed, even God, a being of infinite perfection; the meanness of us who oppose and affront him by our wickedness; and the many obligations we lie under to love, serve, and obey him: If these things are duly considered, we must acknowledge, that eternal punishment is what ought justly to be inflicted for our sins and vile enormities.

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* 2 Thef. i. 8. 9.

Since then, the rewards and punishments of our life on earth, will be without end ; of what great importance is it, for us seriously to reflect on and consider this, and to behave here with the greatest exactness. How solicitous should we be to be saved, and to avoid eternal misery ? How careful of our life and actions ; always to do well, and abstain from evil ! how should it excite us speedily to repent of our evil ways, and strive to forsake them ! O let us consider to how much misery we are obnoxious, unless we repent ! that nothing but the uncertain remainder of a frail life, stands between us and endless misery ! that we know not but the next moment may be our last ; which if so, and we die impenitent, we are forever undone. As yet life is proposed to us ; for life and death are set before us, that we may chuse either. We are assured, that wicked men shall go away *into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal* ; on purpose that we may fear and strive to avoid the former, desire and obtain the happiness of the latter : which if we neglect, our punishment will be the more exceedingly aggravated.

As I have briefly, but yet imperfectly described the misery of the wicked, it may also conduce to many good purposes, shortly to represent the happiness of the blessed. All good souls, on their departure hence, will *rest from their labours*, and enter into a state of peace and rest. Their labour was in this life ; their reward will be in the next. Governors will then be eased of the burden and trouble that attends government ; the labourer will rest his weary limbs ; the *servant be free from his master*. That labour and care which was necessary to provide for and support this mortal body, will then have an end forever. In heaven there is no eye that weeps, no tongue that complains, no breast that swells with disconsolate sighs ; no sufferings shall afflict

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or annoy the happy soul. He is delivered from the pains and diseases of the body; he is not troubled with the treachery of seeming friends, nor with the death or alteration of real ones. God will *wipe away all tears from his eyes, and there shall be no more death, sorrow, nor pain* †. The good man indeed leaves all his worldly enjoyments, and his body in the dust; but then he also parts with the troubles, afflictions, and evils of this life; he is delivered from all the allurements and temptations to sin. The happy saint, when removed from this world, is perfectly safe from his adversary the devil, who here goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And having fought the good fight of faith, and finished his course, there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, with which God will reward him at the last day. And how pleasing, how transporting must it be! to see himself, after much labour and many dangers, arrived to a place of perfect rest, safety, and true felicity? when he remembers what terrible conflicts he sustained against the enemies of his salvation; how often he was overcome by them, and yet, at last, got a final victory. This reflection must afford abundant pleasure and satisfaction to every happy departed soul.

The place to which the souls of good men are conveyed, is to *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. A place serene and calm, beautiful and harmonious; a bright eternal day will there constantly shine, without the aid of sun or moon; for the *glory of God will enlighten it*, and that of *the lamb*, our Lord Jesus Christ. A good man at his death, may say, “If I must leave my dearest friends and relations, part with the most glorious palaces, the most delightful prospects, the most agreeable gardens, the richest furniture, and every thing that can render this life commodious,
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pleasant and happy; yet when I arrive to this heavenly place, I shall not miss, but even condemn all I left behind me. For I shall then enjoy and eternally live with the most excellent society; with the prophets and apostles, with the noble army of martyrs and confessors. Perhaps I shall meet with many dear relations, intimate friends, and it may be some enemies, to whom I shall be perfectly reconciled. I shall enjoy the company of all good men that ever lived, even *a great multitude of all nations, people and languages* *. In the heavenly Jerusalem, there shall not enter any *thing that defileth, that loveth or maketh a lie* †. No pride or envy, malice or treachery, ambition or covetousness, will ever come to disturb that holy place. All the company there are saints perfected in glory. All the wickedness of men and devils, all those passions and vices which disquiet this world, and hinder the pleasure of society and conversation, will be there forever banished. The company of heaven are fully satisfied with their own happiness, and by mutual love, entirely pleased with the glory and felicity of each other.

And with what ravishing conversation, with what endearing and delightful discourse, may we suppose such excellent happy spirits to entertain each other? and their unanimous concurrence, in offering their highest praises to God, must vastly enhance the pleasure and delight of one another. The company of the blessed, do with most cheerful voices join in their united praises to the high God, for his infinite perfections, and wonderful goodness to the children of men. O happy place! O blessed society! who would not wish and long to be there? who would not *desire to depart, and be with Christ*? To be absent from the body, and present

* Rev. 7. 9. † Rev. 21. 27.

sent with the Lord? To be conducted on our departure hence to the mighty Jesus, the glorious king of heaven, the great lover of souls; who will receive us with the most ravishing demonstrations of kindness. To him who so loved us, as to descend from heaven, and die, that he might redeem and save us; who here sanctifies and guides us by his Holy Spirit, bears with much patience our many infirmities and offences; and who therefore we need not doubt, will embrace us with the greatest love; and say, *well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy master's joy.*

PRAYERS.

P R A Y E R S.

A family prayer, for morning or evening.

AL MIGHTY God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid ; give us grace, we beseech thee, so humbly to confess our sins and offences, as to obtain the pardon and forgiveness of them ; and make us perfectly to love thee, and devoutly magnify thy holy name, thro' Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Confession.

AL MIGHTY God and most merciful Father, we humbly confess, that we have followed too much the desires and inclinations of our vain and deceitful hearts. We have offended thee in thought, word, and deed. We have neglected to do what thou hast commanded, and have committed what thou hast forbidden. We have neither loved, served, nor obeyed thee, as we ought to have done ; having in multiplied instances greatly provoked thy divine majesty. But, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders. Pardon and forgive us, who confess our sins, and are heartily sorry and penitent for them. Spare us, O God, tho' we deserve punishment ; and of thy great goodness, restore us again to thy favour. And we beseech thee, O God, to grant us true repentance, and the grace of thy holy spirit, that we may for the future, live a godly, righteous and sober life ; to the glory of thy holy name, and the salvation of our immortal souls, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer for repentance, and amendment of life.

AL MIGHTY God, we acknowledge that our many and great sins, have justly deserved the severest punishments, tho' in the multitude of thy mercies, thou hast hitherto spared us ; accept, we beseech thee, of our unfeigned sorrow, for all our past offences ; and of thy great mercy, pardon and forgive us all our sins. And grant that we may never so depend upon thy goodness, as to despise thy power and justice ; but let thy patience and forbearance excite in us a greater care not to offend thee for the future. And so graciously assist our endeavours to repent and amend our lives, that the remainder of our days being pure and holy, we may at our departure hence, enter into eternal glory, thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

A prayer for grace, and temporal mercies.

O Most gracious God, the author and giver of all good gifts ; we humbly beseech thee, to grant us thy grace, that we may rightly discharge our respective duties to thee, our neighbour and ourselves. Make us just and honest, chaste and temperate, humble and merciful, kind and charitable. Keep us from pride and envy, hatred and malice. Endue us with a patient and contented spirit, that under all the dispensations of thy providence, we may be resigned to thy divine will. So fit and prepare us by a life of virtue and holiness, for death and judgment ; that we may be always ready to leave this world, whensoever thou shalt be pleased to take us hence. And we also intreat thee, of thy great goodness, to give
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us so much of the necessities and conveniencies of this life, as thou in thine infinite wisdom, knowest to be most needful and expedient for us. And whatever temporal blessings thou shalt be pleased to confer on us, give us grace to use them with temperance, moderation, and charity, to thy honour and glory, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer for the royal family.

O Almighty God the only governor of princes, we most heartily beseech thee to bless with thy favour, our sovereign lord king *George*; and so powerfully assist him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that he may always obey thy will, and keep thy commandments. Endue him with wisdom, counsel and might, that he may defeat and overcome all his enemies. Bless him with health, long to reign over us. Grant that we and all his subjects may faithfully serve, honour and obey him. And after this life is ended, crown him with glory and bliss eternal. And we pray thee to bless the prince and princess of *Wales*, the duke, and all the royal family. Govern and direct them by thy Holy Spirit, prosper them with all happiness in this world, and bring them to thine everlasting kingdom, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer of intercession.

O God, the creator and preserver of all men, we humbly beseech thee to extend thy pity and compassion to the whole race of mankind. Grant, that thy gospel may be published to all the world; that all nations may believe in thee, the only true God, and in Jesus Christ our Lord. Bless thy church universal, with the spirit of truth and unity

unity, peace and charity ; more especially, we pray thee to protect and enlarge thy church established, among us ; preserve us from the corruptions of popery and the miseries of slavery. Bestow an abundant measure of thy grace upon our bishops and clergy ; that by their good instruction and pious examples, they may faithfully discharge the duties of their ministry. Bless these nations, pardon our many and great sins, and remove thy judgments from us. Make us a holy and happy people, and settle us upon the firm foundation of truth, righteousness and peace. We also recommend to thy infinite goodness, all who are any ways afflicted or distressed, in mind, body or estate ; most humbly beseeching thee, who art the father of mercies, and God of all comforts, to relieve and support all thy afflicted servants according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy deliverance out of all their afflictions. Have mercy and compassion upon all who are at the point of death ; pardon their sins, strengthen their faith and hope in thee, and give them life eternal, thro' the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A thanksgiving.

ALMIGHTY God, father of all mercies, we thy unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks, for all thy goodness and loving kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee, O Lord, for our creation, and daily preservation, from many accidents and dangers, and for all other blessings of this life. But above all, we laud and magnify thy holy name, for thine inestimable love, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. We praise thee for the light of thy gospel, for delivering us from popery, superstition, and slavery ; and for all the means of grace afforded us, to obtain eternal life. And give us,

we beseech thee, a due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be sincerely thankful for them. And enable us to shew forth thy praise the remainder of our days, not only with our lips, but in our lives and conversation ; by devoting ourselves entirely to thy service, after the example of our blessed Saviour ; to whom with thee and the holy spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

A concluding prayer.

O Most gracious God, infinite in goodness and mercy, wisdom and power, who art always attentive to the sorrowful complaints of thy creatures ; mercifully receive these our prayers and supplications which we make unto thee, for safety and protection from all dangers and adversities ; and graciously hear us, O God, that by thy good providence, we may be ever defended from all manner of evil accidents, and be supplied with all things necessary and convenient for us. And in all difficulties and distresses, give us grace patiently to submit to thy heavenly will. And if thou shalt be pleased, to keep from us thy afflicting hand, let such thy merciful goodness so engage us to a dutiful obedience to thy holy will and commandments, that we may for the future serve thee with the greatest care and diligence, to the praise and glory of thy name, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A morning or evening prayer for a person in private.

Confession, and prayer for pardon.

ALMIGHTY and most gracious God, thou art infinite in all perfections. All thy works are wonderful, and declare thy almighty power, wisdom and goodness. Thy law is holy, just and good, and it is both our duty and interest to obey its excellent rules and precepts. But, O Lord, I confess with shame and confusion of face, that I have not duly regard-

ded the many obligations I am under, to love and fear thee, and to obey thy commandments. I have too eagerly followed the corrupt customs and wicked practices of this world. I have retained too much distraction of thought, and deadness of spirit, in my religious exercises; deceiving myself with meer shadows of piety and devotion, and with a form of godliness instead of the life and power of it. Proneness to evil follows me, my understanding is darkened, and my rational faculties are depraved by sin and disobedience. My whole life has been very inconsistent with my christian profession; having been very careless and negligent in the knowledge and practice of my duty. O Lord, I am not able to give any tolerable account of my time, or of the various methods which thy grace and goodness have afforded me for my reformation. Thus have I blinded my reason, stifled my conscience, quenched thy spirit, and slept securely upon the brink of destruction. O God, I am ashamed, amazed and confounded at my behaviour towards thee. But, thou, O Lord, who knowest my make, and that I am but dust, pity my frailty, and shut not up thy tender mercies in displeasure against me. Remember not, I beseech thee, the many follies and vanities of my childhood and youth, nor the innumerable transgressions of my riper years. Forgive my going in forbidden paths, thro' the several stages of my life; more especially, all my omissions of duty, and commissions of evil, either in thought, word or deed, against thy divine majesty. O Lord, thy mercies are unbounded; and thou hast promised to receive repenting sinners again to thy favour. O let this goodness of thine, lead me to such a repentance, as may fit me for thy pardon and acceptance, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A prayer for grace.

AND, O God, as I earnestly implore the pardon and forgiveness of all my sins, so I beseech thee also to grant me the grace of thy holy spirit, to enable me to conquer and subdue them. Raise in me a perfect enmity against whatever thou hast forbidden, and is contrary to thy blessed will; and dispose me to such an entire affection to all thy commandments, that it may be my delight and pleasure to obey them. Grant, that I may walk more circumspectly for the future, redeeming the time because the days are evil; and give all diligence to make my calling and election sure. Endue me with the true knowledge of thy will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and assist me in the conscientious practice of it. Encrease in me that faith which worketh divine love, which purifieth the heart and life, and overcometh the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sanctify all thy dispensations of providence; make me humble in prosperity, patient in adversity, thankful and contented in every condition of life. And, O that I may always mind the one thing necessary, and in the first place, seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness; that so whatever things I leave undone, I may be still working out my salvation with fear and trembling: and since we are but strangers and pilgrims on earth, and meet with many temptations, to draw us into sin, and make us unmindful to prepare for death and judgment, grant, I beseech thee, that I may be always ready for my last and great conflict with the powers of darkness. Afford me, O God, the light of thy reconciled countenance, when passing thro' the dark valley of the shadow of death; that having the testimony of a good conscience to support my then weak and fainting spirit, I may be able to reflect with comfort and delight on a well spent life, and to have in view the bright prospect of enjoying future glory and immortality

talitiy in thy heavenly kingdom, thro' the merits
and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A thanksgiving.

O Eternal Lord God, the almighty creator of
the world, who delightest in doing good to all
thy creatures, but more especially, in bestowing up-
on us the children of men, not only temporal good
things, but such also as are spiritual and eternal.
All thy works praise thee, O Lord, how much
more ought we to fear and love, to bless and praise,
to worship and serve thee, who hast given us reason
and understanding to know thee, and to admire and
celebrate thy most adorable excellencies and perfec-
tions. We thy unworthy servants beg leave to join
ourselves with all the heavenly host, to worship thy
most glorious majesty, to express the due sense we
have of all thy benefits ; by paying thee our most
thankful acknowledgments, by making the best ob-
lation we are able, and devoting ourselves entirely
to thy service. O Lord, we bless thee, for that
light and law of reason in our minds, and the reve-
lation of thy word which thou hast afforded us. But
we have new matter of wonder and praise for thy
marvellous love in Christ Jesus, by whom thou hast
given us exceeding great and precious promises ;
who hath sealed them with his blood, and confir-
med the truth of them by his resurrection, ascen-
sion, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. We
bless thee for the many opportunities we have
had, to know the truth and purity of the Christian
religion, which comforts us in this state of misery
and mortality, with the blessed hope of eternal life.
We praise and magnify thy great name, for afford-
ing us every thing that is necessary for the support
and comfort of our lives ; and that thou hast defen-
ded us from many accidents and dangers. O that
all mankind would praise the Lord for his goodness,
and his wonderful works to the children of men :

For it is a good thing to give thanks unto thee, to sing praises unto thy name, O thou most high. I will therefore laud and magnify thee, the only wise God; to whom be ascribed all glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

Intercession.

AND I humbly implore thy mercy and compassion for all mankind. Maintain and prosper thy church in the world; let it abound in truth and piety, and enjoy peace and tranquility. Remove out of it whatever is contrary to thy holy religion; and give success to those who labour for its greater purity and enlargement. Bless these nations with health, peace, and plenty; and let true piety and virtue encrease among us. Pour down thy blessings upon our sovereign Lord the King. Protect his person, prosper his government, and let his reign be long and happy. Bless all ranks and degrees of persons among us, with so much faith and purity, justice and charity, prudence and usefulness, that thy will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, commiserate and relieve all who are under affliction of body or mind. Sanctify all thy dispensations to them, and grant them a speedy deliverance out of all their troubles. I recommend myself, and all that are near and dear to me, to thy fatherly protection and good providence. We are daily incident to danger, both awake and asleep; and can only rely on thee for safety and defence. Make us, we beseech thee, duly sensible of our latter end; fit and prepare us for it; that when we shall finish our course here, and put off human nature, we may be clothed with immortality, and pass the gate of the new *Jerusalem* with peace and joy; and go away into eternity, praising thee with angels and saints, and all the host of heaven, unto eternal ages, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen.*

A prayer for protection in the morning.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, we give thee our most humble and hearty thanks, for that thou hast graciously preserved us from all perils and dangers of the night past. And we beseech thee, to defend us this day, from the power and malice, the assaults and attempts of all our adversaries. Keep us in health and safety, in peace and innocence, in love and charity. Let no temptations to sin overcome us, nor any sad accident befall us. And grant that all our actions being directed and governed by thy infinite wisdom, we may always do such things as shall be agreeable to thy blessed will; and be enabled by thy mercy to lead the remainder of our days peaceably and quietly, to thy glory, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer for protection, at night.

ALMIGHTY God, by whose gracious providence both day and night are governed; we, who have been hitherto preserved by thy fatherly goodness, from all dangers, for which we praise thy divine majesty; do most humbly beseech thee to continue thy merciful protection over us this night. Defend us from all evil, and sad accidents. Grant us quiet and refreshing rest, and bring us in health and safety to the light of another day. All which we humbly beg thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

N. B. *Either of these prayers may be used by a family or private person, only changing the number.*

A prayer in time of affliction.

O Eternal God, who never failest to assist them who put their trust in thee; grant us grace, we beseech thee, in all troubles, dangers and necessities, to place our whole trust and confidence in thy

mercy, and chearfully to submit to all the dispensations of thy providence. Take from us all anxious and solicitous care about the things of this life. Make us diligent and industrious in our several duties, and careful to obey thee. Inspire us with patience, resolution, and fortitude, to go thro' all the troubles, trials and temptations, we are to meet with here. Endue us with a spirit of true devotion, that being instant in prayer, we may be comforted and supported by thy mercy, under all our afflictions, and in thy good time be delivered from them. And after this short and painful life is ended, bring us to that state of happiness and perfect bliss, which thou hast reserved for those, who love and serve thee, thro' the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A preparatory prayer, for death and judgment.

O God, my almighty creator and redeemer, who hast appointed all men once to die, and that after death, we must give an account of our behaviour here, in order to be finally judged to a state of eternal happiness, or misery; grant, that I may now so live, as not to fear the terrors of death, but be always ready to appear before thee. Teach me so to number my days, so to apply my heart and mind to the practice of all virtue, by a constant course of sincere obedience to thy will; that whenever I shall depart this life, I may enter into the joy of my Lord. Give me, I pray thee, an humble, patient, and resigned mind to thy heavenly will. And let the grace of thy Holy Spirit powerfully support and assist me in my last and great conflicts with the king of terrors; that I may with Christian resolution encounter the agonies of death, and patiently wait till thou art pleased to translate me to the regions of peace, to a blessed immortality in thy heavenly kingdom, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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